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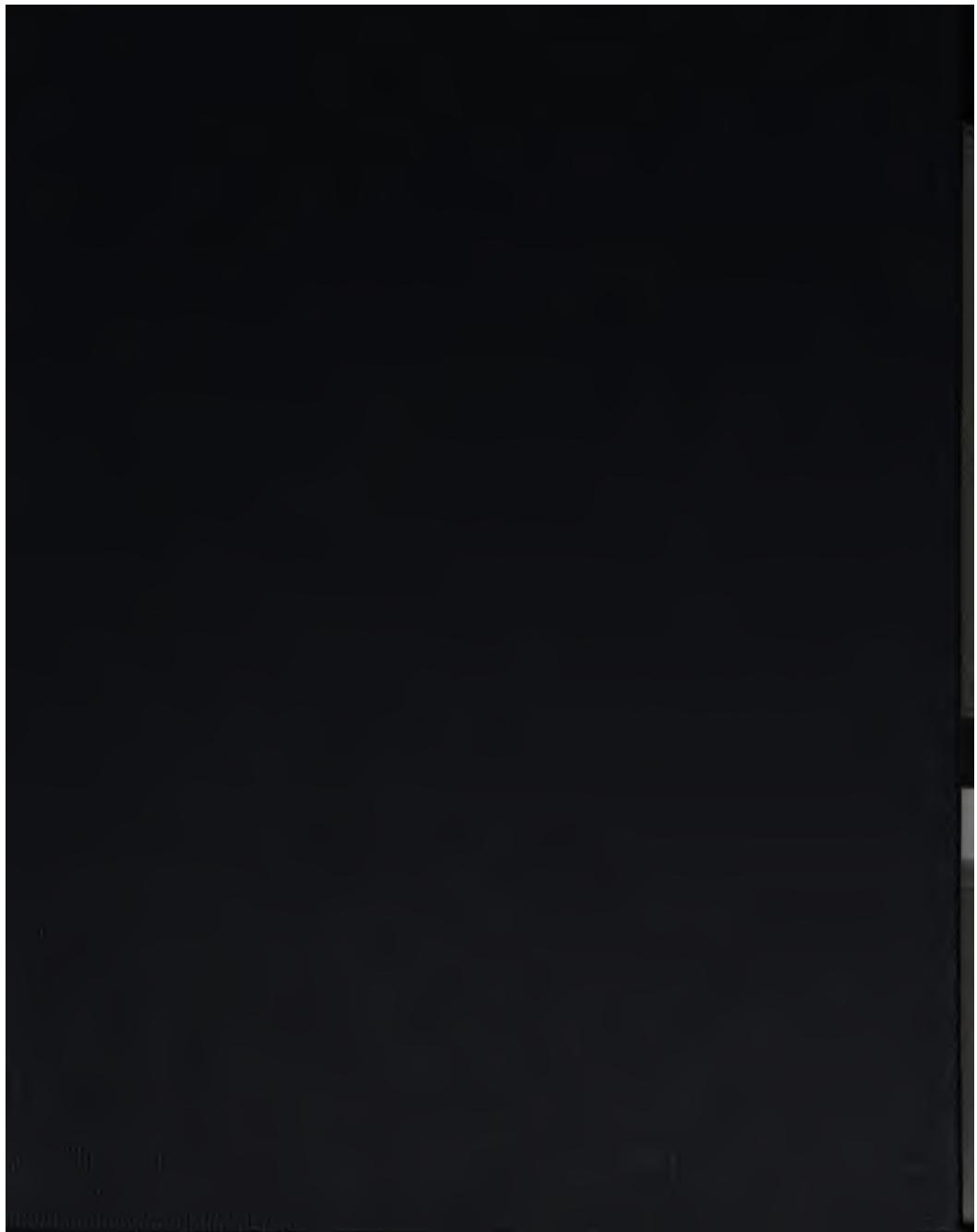
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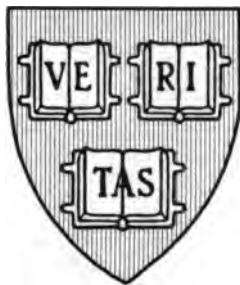
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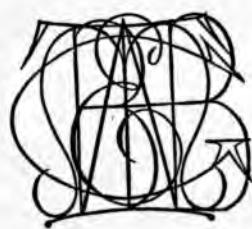
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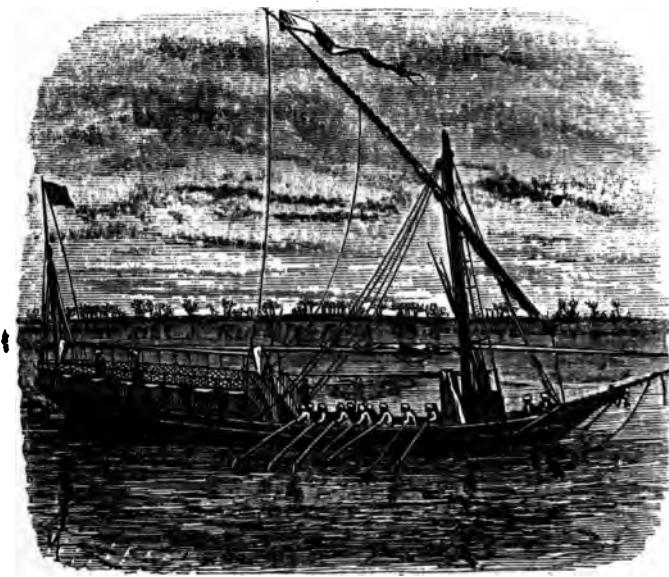
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ROBERTS BROTHERS.

1877.

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K I S M E T.

CHAPTER. I.

BELL.

IT was an old letter, a little worn at the edges as if with frequent reading. It was a long letter, and closely written, as though the writer had taken a certain pleasure in lingering over his work. It was the letter of a man very much in earnest. It was the letter of a man very much in love. And yet in spite of all these things, Miss Hamlyn, turning over its pages with a listless air, was guiltily conscious of feeling decidedly, unmistakably bored.

To be sure that might have had something to do with the weather. The afternoon was certainly hot to an unusual degree—hot even for Egypt. The sun shone blankly down upon the glassy surface of the river; the vast open sky seemed quivering with heat; there was neither shade nor color in all the endless expanse of the plain. It must be the weather, Miss Hamlyn decided after a moment's reflection. Perhaps on the whole it would have been wiser had she not attempted to read this over to-day, she thought, and cast a doubtful glance at the paper in her hand. At all events—“Poor George,” she said, half aloud, “how fond he is of me! I wish he were here. I wish some one were here. I wish—.” She smiled slightly and confidentially to herself. She looked up suddenly with

a petulant motion of her head, and an equally unaccountable frown. She sighed. She rose slowly from among the cushions of the divan upon which she had been lounging, and slowly crossed over to the opposite part of the deck.

The others were all apparently asleep. The great pointed sail of the *Princess*, hanging in heavy folds about her long curving yard, was only serving to throw a little shadow over the captain of the dahabeah crouching — a heap of blue cotton cloth surmounted by a spotless turban — at the stern. A low gurgling sound, as of bubbling water, and a faint perfume of attar of roses, marked the presence of the dragoman and his nargileh at the foot of the stairs leading from the upper to the lower deck. The only sound of voices came from the shore, where, with a slow sleepy song, the sailors were tracking along the bank. Miss Hamlyn stood leaning on the railing watching them for a long time. The narrow tow-path wound along the river's brink, now bending to avoid some group of thorny mimosa trees that crowded thirstily down to the water's edge, — their pale, gray-green leaves looking like a cloud of smoke around their yellow blossoms, — now climbing the steep mud-bank, the long procession of blue-gowned Arabs in sharp relief against the burning blue of the sky. Every few moments one of the men would dash into the water to lift the long rope over some obstacle, — a heap of stones, or the sunken branches of a fallen palm. Sometimes the line became entangled out of sight, and whenever this occurred the men took it as a signal, instantly dropping into attitudes expressive of the most profound repose; the song died abruptly upon their lips, and the hot stillness rested like a weight upon the day.

At its fourth or fifth repetition Miss Hamlyn felt this little incident begin to pall upon her. She glanced irresolutely at the books upon the table, and then, bending mechanically to pick up her fallen letter from

the deck, she opened it once more, and once more began to read.

... "I saw some people yesterday whom you will probably meet," — her correspondent had added in a sort of postscript. — "Did you ever hear me speak of Arthur Livingston? He is a man I saw very often at one time. A good fellow; I know you will like him. He is travelling with a Mr. and Mrs. Meredith of Boston. Mr. Meredith is, as far as I can make out, a kind of scientific dilettante, but Livingston assures me he is a capital fellow when you come to know him. I dined with them all at their hotel last night, and we talked of Egypt, and of their proposed winter on the river. What would I not give to be in their place! What would I not give for any chance — the smallest — of seeing you! It is not a month yet since we said good-by, and I am wearying already for the sight of your sweet face. Wearying and wondering how I am ever to live through all these months without you, my Bell. You will be kind and write to me from every post-town on the Nile? It is only when your letters reach me that I seem to be sure of your love. For sometimes I scarcely dare believe in it. Sometimes, remembering how hardly it was won, I doubt if indeed it can be wholly mine. Sometimes I fear it is your pity and not your heart that you have given me, and then, — For both our sakes — in mercy to us both — be honest with me, Bell!"

Miss Hamlyn let her hands fall upon her lap and sat there quite motionless for a moment, gazing gravely out across the water. Whatever the subject of her meditations may have been, their conclusion seemed the reverse of cheerful. When she turned to her letter again it was with a quick impatient sigh, with a sudden impatient manner, which was at once the confession and defiance of some importunate thought.

... "I told the Merediths to be sure to look your party up, and sent my 'kind regards' to 'Miss Hamlyn.' I cannot tell you, dear, how I long for the spring

and for your return, that I may see your father at last, and the need for all this secrecy be at an end. I am so proud of you — so jealous of you — I love you so, that I shall never be contented until all the world can know that you are mine, my love, my very own."

And then, — with a few more loving words, — with another entreaty to write often and soon, — with yet one more assurance of profound devotion, the letter ended, its writer remaining "entirely and for ever" hers — "GEORGE FERRIS."

By this time it was nearly five o'clock. Sounds of some one moving were heard below. The dragoman laid aside his nargileh and disappeared down the passage leading to the cabin. A clattering of china and a rattling of spoons followed his entrance into the steward's pantry under the stairs, and presently Luigi, the Maltese waiter, made his appearance on deck and began to arrange the table for afternoon tea.

"Isn't it hot, Bell?" said some one in an aggrieved voice close behind her.

Miss Hamlyn started, thrusting her letter hastily into the pocket of her dress. "Oh! here you are at last," she said, "I was beginning to think you had all died or something, but was too lazy to go down and investigate. Have some tea, Flossy? You will find the divan more comfortable than that chair. And where is papa, by the way?"

"Just waking up from his nap. He will be here in a minute. I don't see how you can stand it up here, Bell, — it's even hotter than down-stairs."

Very likely it was, Miss Hamlyn assented carelessly. But what was one to do? Some one of the party must be perpetually sacrificed to the public welfare, and a constant look-out be kept up for ruins and crocodiles, and all that sort of thing, if they did not wish utterly to forfeit their character as intelligent tourists. Not that any thing had been lost by staying below. "One must suppose, in self-defence, that we have not yet got to the interesting part of the Nile. At least we have

passed nothing but a lot of buffaloes, one mud village, and an endless procession of palms, since luncheon. Have some more biscuits, Flossy? If this sort of thing goes on much longer I shall look forward to eating as to an occupation, and count my days by my dinners soon."

"Ibrahim says there is another dahabeah just ahead of us," remarked Mrs. Hamlyn, "perhaps we shall overtake her to-night."

"What flag?"

"He was not sure. But one of the men said it was like ours."

"Then they are Americans. What a blessing if it were only some one we know! Indeed I feel quite a Robinson-Crusoe-like interest in any civilized human being just now. I can hardly imagine any one so unpleasant I should not welcome them as a change. Provided always that it is not those detestable ~~people~~ who sat near us at the hotel. They started only the day before we did, you know."

"You mean the man with the pretty wife and his friend?"

"Pretty! Why, Flossy, where are your eyes? She was simply one of the handsomest women I have seen since we left home. And the husband, too, looked nice. But the friend! — I never shall forgive that man — never, for the way he — he bored me at *table d'hôte*, I mean."

"I did not know he had ever spoken to you at all," said Flossy sleepily.

Miss Hamlyn smiled with a certain exasperation. It was perhaps a peculiarity of her own, she intimated loftily, and under ordinary circumstances she would hardly have noticed it, but there, at Shepeard's, where everybody made a point of speaking to everybody else, it certainly *was* provoking to have had to sit through so many endless dinners beside a man who looked as though he could be so very nice if he chose, — that was the aggravating part of it, — but did not consider one

worth the trouble of being agreeable to. Miss Hamlyn would not for the world have wished to know the reason of this silence. Of course every one had the right not to speak unless they wished to. And it really could not be of the slightest importance to her what a perfect stranger had objected to in her appearance. In fact nothing could be of less consequence to her in any way. And—"did Flossy want some more tea? For, after all, silence is the severest and most unanswerable of criticisms," Miss Hamlyn said, looking thoughtfully into her teapot. "Here, take your cup, Flossy dear, and remember this one thing. Whatever iniquities I may commit in the future—speak! say any thing you like, but speak. Any opinion is better than a private one. And now, there is papa."

Mr. Hamlyn came up the stairway with an opera-glass in his hand. He was a tall thin man, with gray hair. His only peculiarity was a pair of intensely brilliant and glassy brown eyes, which glittered strangely, as though misplaced in that pallid expressionless face. He impressed strangers with the sense of having been bleached out by some trouble rather than by time, having a ghastly lack of color about him, which suggested the blanched look of a wreck washed up on the shore. Indeed one highly imaginative lady had been heard to say that, with his dead-white face, and still shining eyes, Mr. Hamlyn always reminded her of the vampire of German legend. It is but fair to the subject of her criticism to notice, however, that this resemblance was not discovered until after the announcement of his second marriage. Mr. Hamlyn was enormously wealthy. That was the chief fact with which he impressed society. People took him for granted; his frigid, bloodless temperament giving him an unimpassioned manner easily mistaken for the reserve of good breeding. Very few among his acquaintances knew even the leading facts of his history. Those who did were only aware that, the son of a rich merchant in New York, he had gone to the West when an unlucky speculation had

ruined his father, and had reappeared thirty years later with a large fortune, a pretty daughter, and a second wife.

In reality his life had been one of keen anxiety and incessant toil, full of sharp fluctuations of fortune, with here and there long blanks in its history, to which no one but himself had the clew. His motive power had been a passionate craving for luxury, which had made him work his way with the fixed determination of making a fortune for the pleasure of spending it. Now, at fifty, he had come to Europe for the first time. For the first time he found himself at leisure to enjoy, and in a position to indulge, a craving for art, for travel, for literature, and for society, which had been but intensified by the deprivation of a lifetime.

He carefully adjusted the focus of the glass before he handed it to his daughter.

"Look across that sand-bar, between those palms, Bell, and see if you can make out that flag."

"I see something red, and I think — I'm not sure — there is some blue in the corner. What is it? the other dahabeah?"

"Yes. We shall be there in less than an hour, Ibrahim tells me. They have stopped tracking, and we shall have to do the same when we have overtaken them. Our men have had a hard day's work, and they tell me there is a bend in the river just ahead that we cannot pass without a good wind. The captain says he was one week getting round that very corner last year."

The sailors were once more at work, pulling at the tow-rope with an energy only to be inspired by the near prospect of supper and *kif*. The afternoon was growing cooler. Long thin shadows stretched from the rustling line of palms to the very water's edge; a deep violet haze began to creep along the clefts and hollows in the rose-red range of the Lybian hills; a subtle change stole through the dry hot air; a faint breeze stirred in the waving branches. As at the breaking of some spell, the color returned to water and sky, from

which it had been banished through all the blinding white heat of the day.

"There is the boat,—and it is an American flag," said Mrs. Hamlyn excitedly. "Bravo! now we shall see some one to-night. I suppose you will go on board and call, Mr. Hamlyn? We might as well go below and put on white dresses, Bell, in honor of the event."

Half an hour later the *Princess* was moored for the night to two heavy wooden stakes driven into the soft mud of the river's bank; a wide board was laid across to the shore, and a long blue pole rigged up as its railing. Already two or three of the men were busy at their prayers, kneeling on their cloaks spread on the ground, with faces turned to Mecca. The others were all forward on the lower deck sitting on their heels, a chattering circle around the big earthen dish which held the general supper for the crew.

The yellow sunset was shining behind the palms, whose branches glistened like burnished bronze against the evening sky. The long procession of slender trunks looked as though they had been washed with liquid gold where the red light struck them aslant through the wav-ing rustling leaves.

Bell was kneeling on her bed, looking out at the yellow river rushing by, when she heard Mrs. Hamlyn calling her softly, her voice full of suppressed laughter.

"Bell, are you dressed? Come here quick, then!" she said, opening the door of the opposite state-room—"I have got something to show you; be quick!"

Bell went slowly across and looked lazily out of the window. "I don't see any thing," she said curiously, "Why, Flossy, what a deceiver you are. I thought it was our long-lost crocodile at the very least, judging by your excitement."

"Look again," said Mrs. Hamlyn, laughing mis-chievously, "it is something you will like better than a crocodile, unless I am greatly mistaken. There! look who is walking with your father down the path between the palms."

"I don't see any—oh!—oh, it is not possible!"

"Indeed, but it is quite possible. And your father sent me word he would bring a gentleman back to dinner with him. So now, Bell, I hope you are satisfied," said her stepmother, clapping her hands with an ecstatic little laugh. "Oh, it will be such fun to see you two together! Who knows? perhaps if you are very good he may 'descend to speak' to you this time? Ah, don't you wish now that you had waited to see what fate had in store for you before indulging in all that bad language about the unfortunate man this afternoon?" Bell turned away from the window, her face crimsoned with vexation.

"It is very unkind to tease me so, Flossy,—as though it were not bad enough in itself to have to be polite to that man! What could papa have been thinking of to invite him here to dinner?"

Mrs. Hamlyn laughed again. "Bell, you are too delightful! and the best of it is that I know perfectly well beforehand you will be the most polite and attentive of us all to-night. What a chance you will have to assure Mr. So and So—I have not the slightest idea of what his name may be—that you remember him perfectly well; in fact, it was only this afternoon you were speaking of him to your mamma, and wondering if he might not be in the dahabeh we were overtaking. I declare I will tell him of it myself if you don't."

"Do so by all means," said Bell coolly. "I shall never forgive you for it, that's all. As for being polite, it is not likely that I should treat any guest of my father's otherwise. I certainly should not take the trouble of changing my usual manner for the sake of that man of all others. I daresay he will turn out to be the most commonplace of creatures, with nothing except a little extra affection of frigidity to distinguish him from anybody else. Do you know," she added laughing, "he reminds me of one of those carafes frappées one gets in Paris, with the water frozen inside the bottle. It is a sort of sham ice; it is not as cold,

and it has none of the beauty of the natural thing, but—”

“But it is much easier to melt. Brava, Bell!”

“Flossy!”

“My dear, it is time for you to go upstairs to be ready to receive your friend—that is, if you dare meet him alone, I am not quite ready yet. But will you not change those ribbons before you go? You will naturally wish to look your very best to-night.”

A moment later Miss Hamlyn was safely ensconced in her favorite corner of the deck. From where she sat she could hear her father's voice: “If you will excuse me for a moment I think I can get you the book from my cabin. I am very nearly positive that you are wrong about the date. By the way, you will find my daughter on deck, if you will wait for me up there.” The answer was inaudible. And then there was a moment's pause. “It cannot be.—It is impossible that he should not be coming?” Miss Hamlyn asked herself indignantly. And, almost at the same moment, he came.

“Pardon me for disturbing you, Miss Hamlyn, but I am only obeying orders. I was told to come up and introduce myself to you, which, for more reasons than one, I think you will find a superfluous ceremony. At least I hope George Ferris kept his promise, and mentioned my name. I am Arthur Livingston.”

“Are *you* Mr. Livingston? Why, I thought—I beg your pardon,” said Bell, recollecting herself with a blush. “I mean,—I am very happy of course, to make the acquaintance of any of Mr. Ferris's friends. But I should never have imagined that you could be Mr. Livingston.”

No? It was easy enough to get some of his party to come over and swear to his identity, Mr. Livingston remarked with a smile. Only, in that case, Miss Hamlyn would certainly be called upon to explain the reason of her incredulity. Might he not be allowed to ask for a description of this preconceived Mr. Liv-

ington? Ferris must have been unusually complimentary in his account, Miss Hamlyn looked so charmingly disappointed.

Mr. Livingston was only too kind to think so. As far as she could remember it, there was nothing particularly flattering in Mr. Ferris's description, Miss Hamlyn assured him coolly. "It ended with a prediction — a most unlikely prophecy — and otherwise was little more than the mere mention of his name. Mr. Livingston's name being naturally recommendation enough in itself," Miss Hamlyn added courteously.

Mr. Livingston smiled again. He had a peculiar smile, which had on more than one occasion got him into trouble. Outsiders being disposed to discover and resent some subtle indication of an amused superiority in his most innocent expression. "I have the greatest faith in George's gifts of prophecy," he said gravely. "Whatever the prediction may have been, I warn you that, for my part, I expect it to come to pass."

There was a moment's silence.

"Do you know Mr. Ferris very well?" asked Miss Hamlyn, with a sudden slight hesitation of manner which could not escape the calmly observant eyes of her companion.

"Yes and no. I never knew him very intimately. But I have known him a long time, if that is what you mean. I know all sorts of things about him too. That he is a great friend and ally of yours, for instance."

Miss Hamlyn did not answer for a moment. As her father's voice was heard approaching she looked up quickly. "Flossy and I are great friends of Mr. Ferris, as you say. We like him very very much indeed, but papa — papa does not know him very well," she said; and something in her tone seemed to imply that Mr. Hamlyn's approbation of their friend was rather doubtful.

"I see," said Livingston quietly. "And, by the way, I am to dine here with you to-night, you know.

Do post me up a little beforehand in your family politics. 'Flossy,' for instance; who is 'Flossy'? Not your pet dog, surely?"

"Flossy is Mrs. Hamlyn, my father's second wife." Miss Hamlyn was exceedingly fond of her step-mother, she assured Livingston, with an air of relief at having started so safe a topic of conversation. Mrs. Hamlyn was the very ideal of a chaperon, being dignity impersonified in appearance and impressing the outside public with feelings of respectful terror, while in private life she answered to the name of Flossy, and did exactly whatever she was told to do. "We get on charmingly together," her step-daughter concluded.

Mr. Livingston remembered having seen her at Sheppard's.

"At Sheppard's! Could it be possible that Mr. Livingston had stopped at their hotel at Cairo? And when was he there? Not at the same time as themselves, surely?"

Livingston laughed. "I should think you would shine in private theatricals, Miss Hamlyn? That look of astonishment was very well managed. Very well indeed. Only—I am rather critical in such matters—might I be allowed to suggest that it was perhaps a shade overdone? *Trop de zèle*, you know. That is generally the fault of young performers."

"I do not see why you should suppose—"

"That you ever paid me the compliment of being aware of my existence? Well, no. There is not much reason for it, I admit. Only, speaking to Mr. Hamlyn half-an-hour ago, he happened to mention the fact that the inhabitants of our dahabeah had had the honor of furnishing you with food for speculation this afternoon, and I admired the accuracy with which you had guessed at our identity."

Bell blushed with most uncomfortable fervor. "What else did papa say?" she demanded.

"That was all. Don't be alarmed, Miss Hamlyn! He repeated none of those fearful criticisms on our

party of which you evidently have a guilty recollection. Those he intends to impart to me at some future time."

"Indeed he shall do nothing of the kind! That is—I mean—he would do nothing of the kind, even if there was any thing to repeat."

"I did not need your candid admission to be sure of it," said Livingston, smiling maliciously at her confusion; "come now, do confess? Did you abuse us so very badly? I little knew what a ferocious neighbor I had at Cairo! Seriously, I believe I must have had a prophetic intimation of who you were, I came so near speaking to you several times there, although I never speak to young ladies."

"Why not?"

"Oh, I don't know," carelessly. "I suppose it is chiefly because they are not very interesting to me as a general rule. By merely looking at a pretty girl, in nine cases out of ten I can get all the satisfaction she is capable of giving me. For, granting that she has any thing to say worth hearing—which you must admit is highly improbable—it requires a much greater amount of exertion to distinguish one's self from the common herd of admirers than I find it convenient to bestow. Young ladies are exacting goddesses, Miss Hamlyn, and my devotional moods—like all true religious emotions—are apt to be extremely intermittent. The fact is, I suppose I am no longer so young as I was at one time. It is a melancholy truth that one outgrows one's taste for a great many nice things in this world in the course of some five-and-thirty years."

As he was still speaking Mr. Hamlyn joined them, an open book in his hand. "Mr. Livingston had been quite right," he said abruptly, and with a somewhat chagrined air, "Lepsius gives the date 937 B.C. It was very extraordinary. He could not understand it; for he was in the habit of trusting implicitly to his memory," Mr. Hamlyn remarked. And then, with a

sudden transition to contemporary events, he turned to his daughter to explain how, Mr. Livingston's father having been an intimate friend of his own father years ago, "we are not to look upon Mr. Livingston as a stranger. Indeed, before long, I hope to enjoy the privilege of calling myself his friend," to all of which Mr. Livingston assented with the utmost courtesy consistent with the smallest possible amount of expression. And yet Miss Hamlyn—watching his face with a certain jealous scrutiny—was dimly conscious of some involuntary protest, of a faint yet perceptible smile, the immediate effect of which was to make her blush to the very roots of her hair. With some vague impulse of defiance—some confused idea of connecting herself with the proffered and rejected friendship—she laid her hand upon her father's arm. With a new and curious sense of embarrassment she was suddenly conscious of a dozen little imperfections in her dress and general appearance. The wind ruffled the hair on her forehead, and she thought with a pang of regret of the ribbons she had thrown aside. For a moment she was troubled with a dreadful doubt as to the color of her gown. Still leaning on her father's arm, she glanced at Livingston with a face as serenely non-committal as his own. She listened with exaggerated indifference to the others' voices. With an exaggerated interest she watched the river's flow.

It was a sight worth looking at with less uninterested eyes. The last warm flush of the after-glow had not yet wholly faded from the sky. The twilight was already deepening under the shadow of the palms; near the bank the river ran darkly, mysteriously; but farther out, in mid-stream, the light lingered longer on the rushing water, and pale mother-of-pearl-like reflections still gleamed on its surface. Now and then some belated bird darted quickly past—a dark spot seen against the rosy sky—and once they even saw the shadowy wings and quick uncertain flitting of a bat. From the nearest village a far-off sound of children's

voices and the lowing of cattle came floating across the shining stretch of water, and, close at hand, they heard the low wash of the river and the soft, dry, rustling noise of the night-wind among the palms.

CHAPTER II.

THE PRINCESS BADOURA.

“ A queen
By virtue of her brow and breast ;
Not needing to be crowned, I mean.”

“ **A**RE you coming up on deck for a smoke, Arthur?” “ I think not, to-night. I feel more like having a meditative pipe on shore ; one needs a walk after all that sailing. Will you not join me in my explorations of the interior, Mrs. Merédith ? Fred is too hopelessly lazy, I know.”

“ Don’t let him entice you into going, Margaret. I have been observing the lay of the land from the upper deck, and there is nothing but a ploughed field to walk about in. And as for Arthur’s ‘ meditative pipe ’ ! What could be more amusing to old married people like ourselves than this display of embarrassment on the part of ingenuous youth ? Strange, what curious names men will devise by which to describe a visit to the object of their affections,” said Meredith in a plaintive voice. “ The Hamlyns’ dahabeah is moored about forty yards farther down the stream, Mr. Livingston. Directly on the other side of that point. I take it for granted you will be grateful for the information.”

Mrs. Meredith confessed herself guilty of a certain curiosity about these new people. What were they like, any way ? She had thought the young lady very pretty when she saw her at Cairo. Did Mr. Livingston think she was nice ?

"Charming, of course. What young lady is not charming, technically speaking?" answered her husband promptly. "I can tell you all about them, Margaret. Do spare poor Livingston's blushes when you can. Old Pluto—Hamlyn *père*, I mean—was connected with some rather shady business transactions at one time, but now he is far too rich to have any past, except his account at his banker's. That is one of the convenient discoveries of our American civilization. We treat our fellow countrymen as the old Florentines did their saints, and only recognize them against golden backgrounds. Pluto's wife is a tall, black-haired, black-eyed woman—they would call her a 'beauty' in California—a conventional type of Lady Macbeth in private life. Mademoiselle, Arthur's 'meditative pipe,' is, as you already know, a pretty blonde. But I admit that my information is rather scanty as regards Miss Hamlyn. I have seen for myself that her eyes are very blue and her smile very sweet, but for further details about such trifling matters as her temper and her mind—if she has one—I must refer you to Livingston. I have reason to believe that young man to be a perfect encyclopædia on the subject."

"What is she like, Mr. Livingston?"

"Like? why she was very much like everybody else," Mr. Livingston supposed carelessly. "Perhaps she was charming. Probably she was. But having had the misfortune of offending her at a very early stage of their acquaintance, Mr. Livingston could not conscientiously affirm that any especial charm had been exerted for his benefit. Indeed, she had paid him the compliment of treating him with an elaborate indifference which," Mr. Livingston remarked with a laugh, "must, I fear, have cost her an amount of effort quite out of proportion with its effect upon my obdurate mind." She seemed unusually well-read and intelligent, he thought; but it was a question if she had ever been much in society? There was a certain intensity in her opinions and expressions; she seemed to attach an importance to trifles, which spoke

volumes for her youth and inexperience. There ! was Mrs. Meredith satisfied ? Because if so — his pipe being lit — Mr. Livingston would go out and reflect upon Miss Hamlyn at leisure.

The night was very dark. So dark that Livingston could hardly make out where to put his feet as he scrambled up the bank and came out on a wide, open plain. The ground was rough and broken under foot, and seemed to have been newly ploughed. He stood still a moment to reconnoitre. Farther down the stream the lights of the *Princess* were sending out a ruddy glare through the darkness ; at his feet the river rolled noiselessly by, a darker streak across the night.

As he walked slowly along the bank he saw some lights moving away from the dahabeah, and presently made out the figures of several men carrying lanterns and long unwieldy poles, which cast fantastic shadows on the white sail of the *Princess*, not yet furled for the night. As he advanced still nearer he saw some one else crossing lightly and quickly on the plank that reached to the shore, and sprang forward just in time to offer his hand to Miss Hamlyn, to assist her in climbing the steep mud bank.

“ How do you do, Mr. Livingston ? ”

“ Good evening, Miss Hamlyn.”

They both paused for a moment, looking at each other by the light of the lantern. “ I am going out for a walk,” remarked Bell coolly. “ If you are going to call on my father he will be delighted to see you. You will find him reading Herodotus aloud to Mrs. Hamlyn in the saloon. Excuse me if I do not go back with you. I am rather in a hurry. Good night.”

“ But you are surely not going alone, Miss Hamlyn ? ”

“ Alone ? oh dear, no ! don’t you see my body-guard ? Ibrahim would send all three sailors with me, although I insisted that one was quite enough.”

A pause — Livingston looking thoughtfully at his pipe — Bell tapping the ground with her foot and keeping time to a waltz tune running in her head : then,

"I wish, — forgive my mentioning it, — but I really do wish you would get either Mrs. Hamlyn or your father to accompany you. Really, you know, you ought not to go out alone so late with only these Arabs."

"Why not, I should like to know?"

"It is not safe, to begin with," said Livingston, growing provoked in spite of himself by her evident disregard of his opinion, "and in the next place, it is not a proper thing to do."

"How very unfortunate, considering that I am going to do it!" said Bell, with quiet impertinence. "The men say there is a town or a village — I can't make out which — over in that direction, and I am going to walk until I come to it. Let us hope the Arabian Mrs. Grundy of the place will be fast asleep before I get there! The next time I see you I will tell you all about it. Good night, again."

She turned decidedly away as she spoke, and began following a narrow path which led across the field. "Let us hope the Arabian Mrs. Grundy will not be still more shocked at seeing us together," said Livingston coolly. Miss Hamlyn turned suddenly round. "You are not coming with me?"

"It is my turn now to say, 'Why not, I should like to know?'"

"I do not wish to have you come. It is very kind of you, of course, and I am very much obliged to you; but I would rather go alone, thank you."

"When two people desire opposite things, Miss Hamlyn, one of them has to yield. Somehow I think yours is going to be the more flexible will of the two in this case," said Arthur lightly. "Come now, please don't be cross with me about it! I give you the best of good advice, and when you refuse to accept it I instantly offer you a bad example. Could anybody wish for more? Don't be unreasonable now."

Bell laughed in spite of herself. "But I really would rather you did not come with me," she said, with sudden seriousness. "I am going for a very long walk."

“The longer the better.”

“And I am sure you are only coming out of a mistaken idea of politeness. I am perfectly well able to take care of myself.”

“A most useful accomplishment, I admit. Only as you happen to have three men with lanterns and poles beside myself to take care of you, I fail to see where you are going to get a chance of exhibiting your talents in that line. Which way are we going, anyhow?”

“Towards the village. Over there,—if you *will* come,” said Bell resignedly.

For a while they stumbled along the bank in silence, tripping continually over the uneven earth, the lanterns only serving to make bright circles on the ground and cast a dazzle of light on the bare feet and blue cotton robes of their bearers. Presently they came to a spot where the path turned sharply round the end of a low, indistinctly seen building; they passed the corner with some difficulty, picking their way step by step along the crumbling edge of the bank, and then struck into a wider path, which broadened as they neared the village until they could easily walk two abreast.

“Do you know that you are extremely conventional in your ideas, Mr. Livingston?” asked Bell abruptly.

“You are sure that you are not trying to pay me compliments under cover of the darkness? I have so often been accused of being so much the reverse. But how have I shown my conventionality to you? In advising you not to take solitary rambles at night? I really beg your pardon for having interfered; for, of course, if Mrs. Hamlyn approves, no one else has a right to say any thing.”

“Flossy always approves; or rather, she never disapproves of any thing I may choose to do. I really believe if I were to walk about here until twelve o’clock to-night she would not do any thing but ask me if I had enjoyed myself when I returned. To be sure

•papa would be in an awful rage," added Bell meditatively; "between them both they 'average' very well, and contrive to bestow the ordinary amount of *surveillance* upon me, I suppose."

"It is a fortunate thing for you if they do," said Livingston dryly.

"Why? Are you one of the people who think girls have to be watched all the time? You are partly right, I believe. It must be better for us to be forcibly kept out of mischief than not to be kept out at all, and it makes one feel less lonely, I suppose, to be answerable to somebody besides one's own self for one's conduct?" she said with a sigh, and speaking rather to herself than to Livingston. "You see we are not at all like other people. You can't imagine what a funny kind of education I have had! Six months at some fashionable boarding-school in New York when papa's affairs went well, and then perhaps a couple of years in some Western village where there was hardly a soul to speak to, if some speculation failed and we were out of money. We lived three years in Chicago once without making a single acquaintance in the place. Papa always expected to be rich some day, and meanwhile he would not allow me to make friends with the kind of people we were thrown in with. He always said, 'Wait a few years, Bell, and by the time you are grown up you shall have the best society in America to choose from, and I am determined that my daughter shall never have known any but the very best people.' And he was right, you see. We have become 'swells' ourselves now-a-days," she added, with unsuspicuous candor, "but it was such weary work waiting! and sometimes I did so long to have some friends of my own like other girls! I was so glad when papa married Flossy — you can't imagine what a relief it was to have some one to be with besides papa and something to do besides reading all day long."

"Poor child!" said Livingston, with an involuntary

touch of compassion in his voice ; " but you find life pleasanter now ? "

" Oh, yes, indeed ! it's all right now," said Bell gayly. " In fact I am fast forgetting those old days, and luckily for me I have oceans of time before me to make up for them in. I'm only nineteen yet. The worst of it is," she added laughing, " one does feel so dreadfully at a loss sometimes to discover what, judging from the social standpoint, is the correct thing to do ? I have a strong suspicion that Flossy's rules of etiquette are rather informal at times, and you see I haven't any experience of my own to fall back on when I want to know if I am talking too much to one gentleman or dancing too long with another. It is rather an unfortunate situation, for while we are all more or less unconventional and Bohemian in our ways, I, for one, am not the least unconventional in my aspirations and desires. Do you know, I always feel the deepest sympathy for those among the Children of Israel who, after they were well out into the Desert, ' hungered after the flesh pots of Egypt.' Think how many there must have been in that great horde of people — fat, worthy, commonplace Jews — whose proper destiny led them to be respectable, hardworking, uninteresting members of society — with perhaps a prospect of becoming in due time pillars of the church and master bricklayers ' by special appointment ' to the court of his Imperial Majesty Pharaoh — men who were drifted out of their proper position in life by a torrent of popular enthusiasm that might drown, but certainly would never satisfy them. I really have a fellow-feeling for those poor brother Philistines of mine ! I pity people with orthodox souls in heterodox positions a great deal more than I do those geniuses stifling under a weight of commonplace one reads of in books. At least there is always a chance for the latter that some day they may throw off the load, spread their wings and fly away ; but the others, poor things ! are predestined to a daily life of petty cruci-

fixions, made none the lighter by the uneasy consciousness that their own cherished ideal, could they but reach it, would not be a lofty one at the very best. Mr. Livingston!" — breaking off suddenly — "I am preaching you a perfect sermon I do believe! and, by the way, am I not committing an awful impropriety in letting you take this walk with me? I had not thought of that before."

"Oh, never mind that!" answered Arthur lightly, "the impropriety, if it exists, shall be scored down to my own private account I promise you; and besides that, here among the heathen we have Scriptural authority for being 'a law unto ourselves.'"

"That strikes me as being both profane and untrue," retorted Bell; "at least you did not seem to appreciate in the least the beauty of my version of that law when you met me starting off just now!"

"Oh, but that was quite different. A thing that does not include one's self is always different, — and generally objectionable. But see! I think we are coming to a larger place than you expected? This bazaar looks more like that of a town than a village."

They were entering a long, narrow street, roofed over with torn and ragged pieces of matting, laid across the planks which bridged the space from house to house. Each small box-like compartment in the long line of shops was closed and barred. There was not a sound to be heard as the little procession of figures passed down the street, the sailors walking on ahead, their lanterns slung over their shoulders — laughing and talking between themselves as they brandished the long poles with which they were armed. Here and there — on one of those low shelves in front of the shops where all day long the solemn-eyed merchants sit crosslegged upon their Persian carpets, silently smoking till Allah sends them customers — here and there, a round, yellow heap of fur would uncurl itself as they passed and a thin, hungry-looking Pariah dog would lift his head and stare after them with a sleepy growl.

A spell of silence seemed to rest over the sleeping town. They fancied themselves walking through the streets of an enchanted city, and their imaginations ran riot among the treasures of Eastern glow and color heaped up in careless opulence behind those heavy wooden shutters.

“I do not know how small and poor this place may be in the ‘light of common day,’ ” said Bell, “but to-night I am sure the Purveyor of the Sultan of Casgal must be sleeping in that silent old Khan, and Zobaide is looking down on us from that high grated window up there where that thin ray of light seems struggling to shine between the bars.”

“Yes, and did you notice that one small shop with a dimly lighted window at the entrance of the bazaar? If we were to knock at that door I am quite sure Bachbouc himself would open it to us—Bachbouc, turbanless and hurried, watching far into the night to finish the robe for that faithless miller’s wife. Shall we stop and see?”

As he spoke they heard a sudden sound of voices in the quiet street, and a group of three or four young men passed them, staring curiously at Bell and turning again for another look as they went by; young men dressed in that ugly modern costume of the Oriental, but whose European cloths and red fez caps—while it took all the picturesqueness and dignity out of their appearance—marked them as belonging to the higher classes; young men whose hideous black and white plaid shawls of English manufacture, worn across their shoulders in place of the old-fashioned, gold-embroidered scarf of their fathers, showed that they ranked among the *jeunesse dorée* of the place. They turned in at a lighted garden gate just in front of where Bell and Livingston were standing, and were followed by another group, and still another.

“What do you suppose that place is?” asked Bell curiously. “Oh, Mr. Livingston, look! look quick! what can that be?”

For from out the shadows of the silent bazaar came a stately old man, leading a large white ass with beautiful crimson housings that swept the ground, and on whose high padded saddle of scarlet leather sat the Princess Badoura herself—for where but in the pages of the Arabian Nights do you meet on a quiet country road a damsel dressed in white, whose hair is a stream of sequins and whose breast is glittering with gold?

As they advanced, the old man—an Enchanter of course—raised his lantern above his head, at which the girl threw off her white vail and smiled at Livingston with that slow, sweet smile of old Egypt which yet lingers, like the after-glow of her sunsets in the sky, on the full dark lips of her degenerate children.

Bell turned to the sailors for an explanation. In all the flood of guttural Arabic they poured out, her ear could catch but a single word which sounded familiar. “‘Fantasiā,’ oh, I have an idea!” she said quickly. “Don’t you remember the ‘Nile Notes of a Howadji?’ It must mean that. Fantasiā! are they the Ghawazee, Mahmoud?” she asked, turning to the nearest sailor.

“Ghawazee! aowa, aowa, ya sitt!” and they all laughed. The girl clashed her castanets together, and the bystanders pointed to that illuminated garden gate.

“What fun!” cried Bell eagerly; “they are Ghawazee girls, Mr. Livingston, dancing girls, don’t you know? Was it not clever of me to find it out? Look! There are some more people going in. Do let us go quickly before the places are all taken!”

“Miss Hamlyn! for heaven’s sake think what you are about?” said Livingston in a shocked voice; then breaking off with a laugh, “But of course you are joking? Of course you would not think of going in there?”

“Not think of it! why, *of course* I am going,” said Bell coolly. “Why, Mr. Livingston,” turning round and looking at him in a surprised way, “you surely are not going to object to *that*? Just think what an adventure it will be to tell our people of when we get back! Really if you don’t dare be seen there you must be

most awfully afraid of Mrs. Grundy ; a great deal more so than I am, I can tell you ! ”

She turned to go, but Livingston put his hand out and caught her by the wrist, holding her fast while he said, “ You have not the slightest idea of what you are about. That is probably merely a *café* for natives and sailors. Indeed, you shall *not* go there, Miss Hamlyn, while you are under my charge ! ” He spoke fast and angrily. Bell drew herself up very straight and tall, and stood looking at him for a moment in offended silence.

“ Allow me to say you are making a mistake, ” she answered at last, speaking defiantly. “ No one has put me under your charge, Mr. Livingston, to my knowledge, and I do not consider myself in the least bound to listen to your advice, unless I choose to. May I trouble you to let go of my hand ? You may speak to me as you like — I cannot help that — but I object to being treated as a disobedient child before servants. ”

“ I beg your pardon ! ” said Livingston quietly, raising his hat as he spoke. Then after a moment’s silence, “ Shall we go in now, Miss Hamlyn ? ” he asked in a perfectly calm voice ; “ I am quite at your orders whenever you wish to do so. ” He opened the gate and stood aside to let her pass.

Bell hesitated. The excitement of the adventure, which had seemed to her irresistibly enticing a moment before, had suddenly ceased to exist. She felt confused and mortified by her own words, and for the nonce detested Livingston with all the vigor of a woman consciously and uncomfortably in the wrong — “ If he would only say one word or even look as though he did not want me to go in, I would give it up, ” she thought, but her companion’s face was set in a rigid indifference. Judging by its expression his thoughts might have been at the other end of the world as he stood there idly swinging the gate backwards and forwards on its creaking hinges.

“ Are you coming too ? I am sure it will be charm-

ing," said Bell with cheerful defiance. She looked him full in the face, smiled, and passed in.

It was rather a large garden, but in the darkness they could but dimly make out the outline of what seemed to be a long, narrow building at the farther end. They walked on in silence to a door opening into the wide hall, filled with servants and men dressed in native costume. One of the latter advanced to meet them and showed them into an inner room, from whence came snatches of music.

"What a large *café*!" said Bell wonderingly as they came into a broad hall or saloon, bare and empty of furniture, as are all Eastern rooms, but surrounded as usual by a wide divan running around three sides of it.

Some twenty or thirty men were sitting about. One of them—a fat old Turk—rose and salaamed ceremoniously to the two strangers, waving them to seats at the upper end of the room, exactly facing a group of half-a-dozen native musicians, who were crouched upon their heels smoking, talking, and occasionally striking a few notes on their strangely shaped instruments.

"Well, what do you think now of your sailor's *café*?" asked Bell triumphantly, as a gorgeously dressed servant came up and presented them with coffee in delicate porcelain cups with *fingans*, or holders, of chased and filigreed silver. "Be magnanimous, Mr. Livingston, and acknowledge you were all in the wrong?"

Arthur looked around the room a moment in silence. "I don't quite understand it, I confess," he said doubtfully; "I should hardly have thought this place large enough to support a *café* of this description, unless it be a kind of club-house."

"I wish—I wish they would not look at me so!" cried Bell, with sudden impatience; "don't you think it is very rude and disagreeable of them? There, see those two men in the corner—the fat one leaning over to speak to that young fellow with the beard—I know

they are talking about us: one of them just looked over at me and laughed."

"I hope I shall not have to get into a row with any of them before we leave," said Livingston quietly. "What a curious turban that man with the drum has on! Have you noticed the gold embroidery on his jacket?"

"Yes — no — I don't know," said Bell absently. Then after a pause, she asked in rather a confused manner, "But why should you expect to get into a row with any one? I don't understand."

"No? It is unfortunate to have a will of one's own and yet not understand the consequences of acting on it. Of course if any of those men were rude to you, I should have to resent it, don't you see? Not but that, looking at the matter from their standpoint, I can see how they would be quite justified in inquiring into such an extraordinary performance as your appearance here to-night," he added, with severe impartiality, "only, on the other hand, I should consider myself justified in knocking some one down under the circumstances; which, however, I hope will not be necessary, as you might find it unpleasant. It is always disagreeable to have a lady mixed up in a row."

Bell looked at him aghast. Only an overwhelming realization of her own folly kept her from speaking. As she hesitated, the Ghawazee girls entered the room, and one of them came forward, bowed, and kissed her hand.

Such a girl!

A small, oval face, in which you saw only the mouth and eyes. The mouth was full and still—she smiled at you without moving her lips, or rather, she did not smile, but a radiant look came over her face which transfigured without changing it—like a sudden burst of sunshine on a cloudy day. Her eyes were large and long and darkened with *Khöl*—sleepy eyes with heavy drooping lids. When she opened them suddenly, fixing you with a wide, still stare, the whole face altered;

you seemed to see the infinite opening before you, and were vaguely reminded of —

“ great Egypt's flaring sky.”

But when she did smile, ah, then, to have her look at you was to feel as though she had kissed you! It was such a still, cold, tender, subtle smile, with all that fugitive intangible charm that broods over the divine face of Leonardo's *Mona Lisa*.

Her figure was extremely lithe, yet full; her arms and graceful henna-tinted hands, as slender as they could well be and yet remain on the hither side of thinness. She was dressed in some thick white stuff which reached the ground, covering her feet; but one hardly noticed her dress, so hidden was it under the flood of golden sequins which glittered in her hair, flashed on her breast, weighed down the delicate wrists, hung far below the supple waist, and were even fastened on either side of the pale brown face, framing it in bands of gold. There was something startling in this decoration,—a wild, lawless use of gold, mere gold, for its own sake, in its simplest form,—which seemed strangely foreign to all the timidities of civilization.

The other girls were rather her inferiors both in dress and appearance, but all had the same glance of people who have never thought, so strangely fascinating to eyes grown weary with self-interrogation; a repose in their look which not even children have with us, for intelligent children ask questions, and in these faces was no questioning of fate.

As the dancers entered the room the music began with a slow and monotonous movement. At first the girl stood perfectly still, her eyes fixed on the ground, her arms hanging loosely by her side. Then the rhythm changed, grew hurried, and now the time was sharply marked by the quick throbs of the drum. The Ghawazee's face quivered, her whole body shook and vibrated convulsively, as though she felt the music thrill through

every fibre. She lifted up her head, threw her large glance all about the room, then she smiled slowly to herself and slowly she began to dance.

At first it was a mere spasmodic heaving of the bust and a slow waving of hands. Another girl rose and joined her, and together they advanced and receded, now sliding over the floor with long gliding steps, now bending backwards and quivering all over with intense contraction of the muscles ; now floating about the room ; slackening their footsteps if the music faltered ; with no more apparent effort or volition than there is in some overblown flower blowing and bending in the wind.

There is something wonderfully magnetic in that Arabian music. If in the beginning its sounds seem barbaric and shrill, as the ear grows more accustomed to its sudden transitions and unexpected discords its spirit takes complete possession of the hearer, whose nerves it affects with a wild and almost savage exultation.

At last the girl paused and stood for a moment motionless before Bell ; her bosom rising and falling convulsively under its massive necklaces, but with not a trace of fatigue about her, only a deeper abandon in her smile and a more liquid lovelight in the sleepy, heavy-lidded eyes. She seemed a very Danae languid with pleasure, glittering in her splendid habiliments of gold. The music clashed louder, rose higher as she paused, — then died away in a long, slow, quivering wail which thrilled through Bell's nerves with something like actual pain. She drew a long breath of relief and suppressed excitement, then turned inquiringly to her companion, whose presence she had completely forgotten for the last half-hour. Livingston's face appeared stern and unsympathetic ; he was looking straight before him with a half frown, which seemed to deepen as the moments passed. Bell turned away again with a pettish sigh. "What a bore it is that he will not forget the impropriety to remember the

pleasure for once," she thought impatiently, "looking so cross is not going to prevent my having come here! I only wish I dared tell him so!"

"Madame is interested,—is it not true?" said a voice close behind her, speaking in French. Bell started, and looked around. The fat smiling old Turk who had shown them to their places was sitting next to her on the divan. "Madame has never seen any thing like this before?" he repeated, smiling still more as she looked at him, "Madame should see the Ghawazees of Esneh!"

"Are they better than these?" asked Bell dubiously. She saw Livingston start and look quickly up at the sound of her voice.

"Better! Ah! . . ." He kissed his fat old hand and waved it in the air in the excess of his enthusiasm. "But Madame will see! Madame is going up in the dahabeah, is it not true? Madame will see. Our ladies—they go nowhere—they see nobody—it is very bad,—*c'est bête pour tout le monde*. English ladies, they are *emancipées*,—they go everywhere. They see every thing the men do. That is well." He took an embroidered tobacco-pouch out of his pocket and rolled a cigarette between his skilful fingers, then offered it to her with a polite bow, "Madame does not smoke? or—I mistake! I will say Mademoiselle?"

"Miss Hamlyn! you will oblige me by not answering that man!" said Livingston suddenly and sharply, and rising in a peremptory way as he spoke; "we will go now if you are ready,—that is, if you are quite satisfied with what you have seen!"

"Oh yes, quite," answered Bell, rising too and speaking in an unusually meek voice. "I should *like* to go, if you please," she added, feeling horribly uncomfortable as the old Turk on the sofa sent another fascinating smile in her direction.

"Come on, then! no—stop! I must pay for what we have had," said Livingston. He looked around for a waiter, but all the servants seemed to have left the

room. "Pardon, Monsieur!" he said, touching his hat to Bell's interlocutor, who seemed to be the only person present understanding a European language, "can you tell me who I am to pay?"

"To pay, Monsieur! I do not understand!"

"Yes, certainly, *to pay!* Confound the man!" he muttered under his breath, "does he think I want his coffee given me? This is a *café*, is it not?" aloud. "I wish to pay for what I have had."

The old man rose and bowed elaborately, and with a certain dignity.

"This is my poor house which you have honored with your visit," he said stiffly, "I am proud that you should consider every thing in it as belonging to you,—and Madame," with a side glance at Bell, "I am the Governor of the Province,—at your service." He waved his hand ceremoniously and escorted them gravely to the door, putting aside all Livingston's apologies with perfect politeness but still with a certain offended dignity in his voice, which quite disappeared as he said to Bell:—

"This is the festa — what you call the *réveillon* — of my daughter's marriage. If Madame will return here to-morrow, my daughter will be glad to see Madame in the part of the house for the women."

"I'm awfully sorry, Mr. Livingston, really I am! And it was all my own fault, you know," began Bell, as they turned into the bazaar again on their way homeward; and then a sudden sense of the ridiculousness of the situation overcame her, and she burst into an almost hysterical fit of laughter. "Oh! I beg your pardon! but did you see his face when you offered him that money? The horrid old wretch! it served him right, but how could we be so stupid? Was it not an absurd mistake?"

"Very."

"And wasn't the whole affair interesting? I am so glad I went!"

No answer.

"Don't you wish our people could have seen it too?" persisted Bell.

"I wish from the bottom of my heart that not only Mrs. Hamlyn, but your father as well, could have been there with you!"

"Now don't be so cross, Mr. Livingston. Why won't you admit that you enjoyed yourself immensely?"

"Because I did nothing of the kind. You don't surely expect a man to enjoy himself when he is responsible for the young lady with him in a place like that?"

"I am very sorry I ever went with you, since I am such a drawback on your pleasure."

"Not more sorry than I am," he retorted.

"And—and I think it is very disagreeable of you to speak to me so. I hate people who are always preaching," cried Bell, in a sudden fit of anger; "I do believe you are so cross with me just because you made that mistake, and that was not my fault after all. I am not a bit sorry I went, whatever you may say, and I am sure there was not a particle of harm in the whole affair. It was perfectly proper."

"I do not need to be told again that your ideas of propriety and mine are somewhat different."

After that they walked on for several minutes in angry silence.

"I am afraid it is very late," she said at last, speaking in a deprecating voice. "Have you any idea what time it is now?"

He stopped and took out his watch. "Twenty-seven minutes to eleven," he answered with precision.

"Good heavens!" cried Bell aghast, "how provoked papa will be! Had you any idea it was so late?"

"I had no ideas at all on the subject, Miss Hamlyn."

"Mr. Livingston, I wish you would tell me why you are so angry with me," she said pleadingly, looking up into his face.

"Indeed, I should not presume to do any thing of the kind. As you were good enough to inform me, I have

no shadow of a right to control your actions. I have no wish to offend a second time, I assure you, and you may depend upon my never trying to treat you like a 'disobedient child' again!"

Bell's eyes filled with tears,—tears of impotent and passionate resentment.

"Oh, I think you—you are perfectly *detestable!*" she said in a choked voice. "There is our dahabeah—good-night!" and she turned abruptly away, lest he should see the tears upon her cheeks.

"Allow me," he said, with formal politeness, offering her his hand to cross the plank from the shore to the boat. Bell brushed by him impatiently without answering. A sudden smile lit up Arthur's face as he looked after her. "What a rage that little girl is in, and, by Jove! how pretty she looked just now!" he muttered to himself as he turned away and disappeared into the darkness.

CHAPTER III.

BALLAS.

SINCE dawn a light breeze had been playing fitfully about the great white sail of the *Princess*. By eight o'clock, when Bell made her appearance on deck, they were running at a good pace before a steady wind. It was true Nile weather,—blue, balmy and bright, and even the grand old river seemed rejuvenated as by a touch of the Spring, and sparkled cheerily in the pleasant morning sunshine. The idle sailors were lying luxuriously about the lower deck, lost in a happy dream of unlimited hasheesh and never-ending *keif*. The steersman was smoking placidly at the stern, one hand on the rudder, the other pillowed under his head. The very dragoman had unbent from his

customary state, and committed himself to the assertion that if the wind held out, and they did not run on too many sandbanks meantime, there seemed some remote chance of eventually reaching Thebes.

As the morning wore on the river seemed to change its character. The low fertile mud banks on the Lybian side were still bright with the fresh laughing green of the young wheat, but on the opposite shore the Arabian hills had come down nearly to the water's edge. The huge mountain masses were broken into fantastic forms of temple and colonnade, as though Nature herself were dimly shadowing forth the primeval plan of these now deserted shrines, built long ago in adoration of her powers by her eldest and best-loved children.

Here and there the smooth surface of the cliff was perforated by long rows of square hewn openings. Bell was looking at them wonderingly, when Mrs. Hamlyn, coming up close behind her, laid her two hands affectionately on the girl's shoulder.

"Bell, dear, what in the name of wonder is the matter with you this morning? Can't you find anything better to do than to stare at those old rock-tombs?"

"Just look at them a moment, Flossy, and tell me what they remind you of? To me they seem like the sand-martins' nests of my infancy. There was a great hill near the house we lived in once,—in those days, at least, it seemed so to me,—whose whole face was pierced with the holes of the swallows; the place was fairly alive with their twittering cries and darting wings all the long summer afternoons. In those old days my ideal of human happiness was to climb to the top of that hill and look down one of those narrow square openings to where the eggs lay warm and white in their hidden nests. It was my *idde fixe*. I used to dream about it at night and think about it all day. I remember I even tried to cut a series of steps out of the sand by which I could

mount the hill, but my steps always broke away under my weight and my swallows were always out of reach. Like all the other things I've set my heart on attaining since then, they were too high above my grasp."

"What did Mr. Livingston do or say last night to give you such a fit of the blues, child?"

"As though I cared for any thing Mr. Livingston could say! But I am 'blue' this morning, Flossy—I had a bad dream." She hesitated and looked away. "I want to ask you something. Do you ever—don't you ever—think of George Ferris nowadays?"

Mrs. Hamlyn started and dropped her work upon the floor. She glanced quickly at Bell, who was still leaning over the railing looking vaguely out across the water, then bent to pick up her work, which she shook and folded carefully before speaking.

"No; I very seldom think of Mr. Ferris at all. Why should I?" she added uneasily. Bell did not answer. Mrs. Hamlyn looked up again impatiently after a moment's silence.

"I must say I think it very disagreeable of you, Bell, to set me thinking about that when you know how I want to forget the whole affair. It frightens me even now to remember the letter I got from your father about it. I don't think I ever was so thankful for any thing in my life as for being able to write back that he need not be alarmed: it was nothing more serious than a mere flirtation you had already put an end to. You know yourself, Bell, what your father is when he gets into one of his rages. I declare, if you had not promised me never to mention poor George Ferris's name before him, I do not know whether I should have had the courage to come back with you at all! Your father was so particular in his orders about the way you were to be chaperoned while he was gone, I believe he never would have spoken to me again if he had once got it into his head that I had been careless about you in any way." She spoke fast and with increasing excitement, then

turned to Bell with a sudden terror in her face,—“Surely, surely you are not thinking of telling him about it, Bell?” she said in a voice of mingled alarm and entreaty.

“Don’t be frightened, dear! I’ve no intention of getting you into trouble yet a while,” said Bell gently: “you might trust me so far, Flossy, I should think!”

Mrs. Hamlyn went on sewing for a few minutes in silence. Gradually the flush died out of her face, which settled back into its ordinary unemotional and self-possessed expression — an expression which almost made you blind to the retreating line of the chin and the look of indecision about the corners of her mouth. “What a lucky thing it was that you never cared for him, Bell!” she said at last, as though continuing a train of thought aloud, “and yet, do you know, I used to wonder at it sometimes? Girls seem to be different now from what they were in my time. I don’t believe one of *us* could have had a lover as handsome, as devoted, and so much in love as poor George Ferris was with you, and yet keep on refusing him simply because she could not or would not fall in love with him. Sometimes I think you have no heart at all.”

“Perhaps not,” said Bell lightly. “Who was it telling us the other day about that new theory of the world’s gradually cooling off? According to you, Flo, the process has begun in the hearts of the girls of the period. Certainly we are not as romantic as our grandmamas, but don’t you remember what Heine says in one of his songs:

‘Und wenn auch ein Brutus unter uns wär’,
Den Cäsar fünd’ er nimmermehr?’

I should not be surprised if that had something to do with it. Do you know,” she went on, laughing nervously, “I don’t believe I am half so courageous as I used to be? I should really like to run away and hide myself somewhere to avoid meeting papa this

morning. What on earth do you suppose he will say to me about last night?"

"Don't distress yourself about that, dear. Mr. Livingston has made it all right."

"Mr. Livingston! Why what has he been doing?"

"Didn't you know? — no, I forgot — you went straight to your room last night, and I did not think of telling you about it this morning. Just before you came back your father went out to look for you; — he was awfully angry about your staying out so late, but it appears that he met Mr. Livingston, who told him how he had taken you to the house of the Governor to see some celebration in honor of his daughter's marriage, and your father was perfectly pacified when he found out where you had been. He has taken such a fancy to Mr. Livingston that I believe he would approve of any thing he did, and as soon as he heard that you were not the one to blame for going, he — "

"Stop a minute, Flossy! you have got the story all wrong. Are you sure that is exactly what Mr. Livingston told papa?"

"Perfectly sure. Your father came in and told me of it directly, and said Mr. Livingston took the whole blame on himself, and apologized for his thoughtlessness in having kept you out so late."

"Oh, that is a little too much!" cried Bell, starting up. "I wonder if Mr. Livingston supposes me capable of accepting his help to get me out of a scrape? Where is my father? I'll go and tell him all about it at once!"

Mr. Hamlyn was reading in the saloon when his daughter pushed back the *portière* from the open door, letting a flood of sunlight and heat into the carefully darkened room.

"Good morning, papa. I have come to tell you all about last night," she said boldly, standing directly in front of her father and looking him full in the face. "It was not Mr. Livingston's fault at all; it was mine. Mr. Livingston did not want me to — "

"There, there, child ! that will do !" said Mr. Hamlyn, looking up impatiently. "Don't let me hear another word about it. Mr. Livingston told me the whole story last night—and can't you see that I am busy ? Hand me those papers from that table, Bell—not those!—there, under that green map. That's right ! Now go away, my dear ; draw that curtain after you, and let me alone, and—Bell?"

"Yes, papa ?"

"Tell your mother she is to call with you on Mrs. Meredith the next time we stop near the *Ibis*."

The afternoon was warm and windless. By five o'clock the two dahabeahs had reached the village of Ballas and had furled their sails for the night. Above them, crowning the steep and crumbling bank, stood a superb grove of palms, the finest they had yet seen ; the sleepy rustle of the waving branches added a delicious sense of coolness to their rest. Pigeons were flying in and out between the trees ; the late afternoon sunshine struck athwart the slender isolated stems, filling all the empty space with yellow light, and touching with gold the dripping water-jars some Arab women were filling at the river's brink. Half-a-dozen brown-skinned children had wandered down from the village, and now crouched motionless along the bank staring at the boats and shading their eyes from the low level rays of light that rested on their bare legs and naked shoulders turning them into statues of burnished bronze.

"My husband has gone out shooting, and I promised to walk up as far as the village to meet him," said Mrs. Meredith, to Mrs. Hamlyn as the latter rose to leave ; "I am sure you must be a good walker, Miss Hamlyn, will you not come with me ? For I hope you mean to be good neighbors—I shall want to see a great deal of you if you will let me," she went on, looking kindly at the girl as they started off together, following a narrow path that wound along the bank and taking care not to tread on the tender wheat that

bordered it on either side and covered the ground where stood the palms.

"Thank you!" said Bell. Then, with an impulse of honest admiration—"I am sure I shall like you very much, Mrs. Meredith," she said, looking at the beautiful face of her companion.

Margaret smiled. "That's right," she answered; "I see we shall be great friends before long, and, to begin with, I am not going to call you 'Miss Hamlyn' any more. Do you know I have been quite anxious to make your acquaintance; I have heard so much about you from Mr. Livingston."

"Mr. Livingston is very kind."

"Ah, but if you meant it you would not say it in that stiff way. If you knew how fastidious he is in his taste, and how critical, you would be more apt to appreciate the compliment implied in having pleased him. But I hope you like him, as we do. He is such an old friend of my husband's; Fred feels quite lost without him—they were always together before Fred married. We thought ourselves so lucky in getting him to come up with us this winter. His health has never been so strong, you know, since he was wounded in the war, and I am sure it will do him good to be here, poor fellow! Let me see; I think this must be the right way."

The path they were following turned sharply inland and struck into a wide grass-grown road, in the midst of which stood a group of sycamore trees, warped and twisted and, in some places, split open to the roots. Ballas is the head-quarters for the manufacturing of those great *goolah* jars in use all over Egypt for carrying oil and water. Quantities of them, waiting for transportation, were piled up beside the road—the fresh clay taking such rosy and creamy tints, they seemed from a distance more like heaps of some strange tropical fruit.

Ballas itself is a town of square brown houses, built of unburnt brick, their roofs covered with tiers of quaint

little turrets, thickly thatched with green palm branches — the nesting place of the multitude of wild doves which build and brood about every Egyptian village. A few yellow dogs crept cautiously out of the court-yards as the two ladies passed on, and three or four native women followed them at a little distance, keeping their blue cotton mantles well before their mouths as they begged shrilly for "backsheesh!"

The narrow village street was already shadowy with the twilight, though above their heads the red sunlight still rested on the flat house-tops, where clouds of pigeons were settling for the night. Looking up, Bell's eyes were blinded by a dazzling confusion of shining yellow light and the flutter of a myriad wings. The sun was setting as they came out into the open fields behind Ballas. A sea of pale green wheat stretched out before them, its color strangely vivid in the warm soft light. Narrow beaten tracks raised a few inches above the common level to keep in the precious water of the inundation, divided the wide green plain into a multitude of irregular squares. A faint sweet smell came from the growing wheat and freshly ploughed earth, and seemed to float about and fill all the space beneath the wide arch of the colorless evening sky.

"There they are at last," said Mrs. Meredith, as her husband and Livingston came in sight, their guns slung across their shoulders and a sailor carrying the game-bags. She went forward a few steps to meet them, but Bell lingered behind. A sudden shyness made her unwilling to meet her companion of the night before, and it was with some confusion that she answered Meredith's cordial greeting and acknowledged without looking up the silent bow with which Livingston approached her.

"What luck? Oh, only a few pigeons, not more than half-a-dozen, as we only shot them flying," said Meredith carelessly in answer to his wife's first question. "Will you however oblige me, both of you, by looking at that man?" he went on solemnly, pointing to Livingston, "there is nothing extraordinary about his appearance,

is there, Margaret? You have unprejudiced eyes, Miss Hamlyn; I should really like your candid opinion now?"

"But what has Mr. Livingston been doing, Mr. Meredith?"

"You may well ask," he answered tragically. "Margaret, just remember the amount of times you have heard me sigh — openly and unaffectedly sigh — for the sight of an Egyptian dancing-girl. Recollect how I bemoaned my unlucky fate this very day at lunch because a too favoring wind and a stony-hearted dragon-man had conspired to bear me relentlessly by the classic *danscuses* of Minieh, — and then oblige me by imagining for yourself my outraged feelings as a man and a friend when — my suspicions being aroused by the engaging way in which Abdallah murmured 'Ghawazee!' every time he has approached Arthur to-day — I cross-question him, and discover that not only did he assist at a private and particular *ballet* last night, but my lord had not the slightest intention of mentioning the fact."

"That was all my generosity, Mrs. Meredith. I knew Fred's weakness, and wanted to spare his feelings."

"I'm afraid that defence will not do, Mr. Livingston; it seems to me a perfect breach of confidence on your part," said Margaret, laughing. "Just fancy, Bell, having an adventure of the kind and keeping it all to one's self for a whole day on board a dahabeah where one owes as much to the public entertainment as if one were shut up in a country house on a rainy Sunday afternoon. My dear," turning to her husband, "for the first time since I have had the pleasure of knowing you, let me recognize your claims to be treated as an injured individual!"

"'O woman, in our hours of ease,' etc.," said Meredith. "I begin to feel soothed. Go on, Margaret. Proceed, Miss Hamlyn. You will observe, Arthur, that Miss Hamlyn does not dare trust herself to characterize the atrocity of your conduct."

"Wait a moment, Mr. Meredith," said Bell suddenly;

"since you have heard the beginning it is a pity you should not hear the whole of Mr. Livingston's experiences last night." She stopped short and looked at Arthur ; his quick involuntary gesture of remonstrance was all she needed to confirm her in her impulse, and she went on steadily, "you must know that he not only went to see the Ghawazees, but he went there at my request. He was so shocked at meeting me walking about alone that he felt himself compelled to act as my volunteer chaperon — so you see I am the real culprit after all."

There was a dead silence for a moment.

"Oh — well — I hope you enjoyed yourself, I'm sure," said Meredith, with a frantic and unsuccessful attempt at looking unconscious. "Have you — has any one noticed what a sunset is being wasted on us all this time?"

For the wonderful glory of the afterglow was flooding the whole sky before their eyes. Away to the west the Lybian hills seemed palpitating under the rose-red flush that floated over them. A sudden splendor struck every tree and every house as though the very air had turned to flame ; a splendor which filled the wide western sky with light and then grew deeper and ever deeper in tone until it gathered itself into flakes of fire-lit cloud that floated high above their heads. The whole plain was enveloped in a strange intense glow of light. It was a still warm evening, the voices of the fellahs coming home from the fields sounded clearly through the silence. A flock of brown and shaggy sheep came trooping down the narrow path, stopping every moment to snatch a hasty mouthful of the young wheat ; behind them followed a lamb, a feeble, black-skinned, white-faced little lamb, almost too young and weak to walk at all. One of the sailors picked it up in his arms as it staggered by, and brought it to Bell. The girl played with it for a moment, glad of an excuse for hiding her flushed and excited face, passing her hand softly over the little woolly head and trying to make it smell at the bunch of white bean-blossoms she had gathered by the way.

When she looked up the Merediths had already gone on, and only Livingston was standing beside her.

"And am I not forgiven yet, Miss Hamlyn?" he asked, looking at her earnestly enough, though his voice seemed full of a suppressed amusement.

"Forgiving implies forgetting, doesn't it?" she answered coldly, "I am hardly likely to forget my opinion of you."

"But don't you ever change your mind about people? As for myself, I've completely altered my estimate of your character within the last two minutes."

Bell did not answer. She was walking along the road with an elaborate assumption of indifference which seemed to divert her companion immensely. He turned his head away to hide an uncontrollable desire to laugh as he went on, saying, "I can't flatter myself you would have been very much pleased to see me, but nevertheless I fully intended calling on you this evening to see how you felt after last night's excitement. Did Mr. Hamlyn—I mean, I hope your father was not vexed with you about it?"

"My father would not listen to me when I tried to correct the story you had told him. By the way, do you expect me to thank you for your kind intentions in doing so? I suppose the intentions were kind, although it was implying a poor compliment to me, Mr. Livingston, to imagine that I needed any such modified account of what I really did. I am not in the habit of being afraid of my own actions," said Bell proudly.

"Nor of their consequences apparently," retorted Arthur; "but is that any reason for quarrelling with me, Miss Hamlyn? Seriously now, I do not believe you know yourself what you are angry with me about."

"I beg your pardon. I know it perfectly well."

"But why not tell me of it then, and give me a chance of making my peace again. I would be so awfully sorry if you would only give me a hint as to what past transgression I am to mourn over."

"I had rather not talk to you any more about that, if

you please. Do you suppose I do not know that you are simply laughing at me? I do wish you would not treat me so like a child, Mr. Livingston!" said Bell indignantly.

"Then you ought not to act like one," answered Arthur with deliberation; "for you know yourself what a fearfully injudicious thing you have just been doing. Fortunately it was only before the Merediths, whom I know as well as I know myself; but just imagine if it had been before any one else! I should have thought any one but a child—and a very young child, at that—would have had more common sense. Upon my word, I would give a good deal to understand what earthly pleasure you can find in trying—however unsuccessfully—to prejudice people against you."

"Did you think I was going to stand there and agree tacitly in a deception?" cried Bell hotly.

"Most decidedly, yes, if there had been any necessity for it. As for calling such a piece of reticence 'a deception,' my dear Miss Hamlyn, you were quite right last night when you told me you knew next to nothing about the ways of the world. Do you imagine for a moment that I feel called upon to account to any one—even to Meredith, who is about the best friend I have—for where I go, and whom I go with? You really were utterly childish about the whole affair; but still, poor as you may think my taste in consequence, I must admit that I don't absolutely dislike children of that kind," he said, laughing. "Come, Miss Hamlyn," he added, crossing over to where she was standing, and bending down to look into her averted face, "upon my word, I don't want to vex you. Won't you make friends again?—say Yes or No."

"No."

"As you please."

They walked on again in silence past the village, whose picturesque sky-line of leafy turrets stood out, a fantastic silhouette against the rosy sky; past the heaps of *goolah* jars that gleamed like jewels in the flush of

light resting everywhere on tree and grass ; past the twisted sycamores and down the quiet road, along which a few native women were driving the cattle home. As they reached the turn of the path five or six buffaloes came trooping out from behind the palms, making straight for where they were standing, and shuffling fast over the ground to avoid the blows of the *koorbash* swinging in their master's hand.

Now Miss Hamlyn's especial aversion and fear were buffaloes. To meet a crowd of them, at liberty, and jostling each other down that narrow path was a perfect terror to the girl, who stopped short, then sprang back, looking instinctively to her companion for protection.

"Oh, what shall I do ?" she cried nervously, "oh, Mr. Livingston, — please. — Look, they are coming this way ! I — " She slipped both hands around his arm and held it tightly. It really required a strong effort at self-control on her part not to burst into tears from sheer panic as the big black creatures crowded past, lifting up their hanging heads and looking viciously about from under the shaggy brows that half concealed the small white eyes beneath, and passing with a heavy-footed rush which seemed to shake the ground.

"Why, you poor child, there was really nothing to be frightened at," said Livingston gently, as the last uncouth creature passed on ; "there, sit down on this log a moment, and get over it. You are positively trembling all over with fear. Sha'n't I get you some water ? the river is close by."

Bell shook her head. "I'm — I'm all right now," she gasped, "oh, I think — I'm sure I should have *died* if I had been here alone," she cried, clasping her hands together and looking up piteously in Livingston's face.

"I don't want to laugh at you just now, — but you must know it is 'only the good who die so young,'" he answered lightly ; "there, that's right ! now you look more like yourself. Nature never intended you to frown, Miss Hamlyn. Are you sure you are well enough to go on now ? You will let me walk on the same side of the

road as yourself, won't you? As a mere preventative against buffaloes I advise you to tolerate my society a little while longer," he went on, laughing; "you see even 'detestable' people have their uses in this world."

"You are very kind," said Bell.

The Merediths were waiting for them by their boat as they came up. The last roselight of the afterglow had faded away; already the far-off hills were turning to violet against a pale, pearly background of sky.

"I want you to come and lunch with us to-morrow, Bell," said Mrs. Meredith as she bade her good-night; "I shall expect you about one o'clock, remember."

"Will you walk on with me as far as the *Princess*?" said Bell, turning with a sudden blush to Arthur. "I want to tell you something, Mr. Livingston." She spoke with a sort of proud humility, as though the confession had cost her a struggle. "I am very—sorry—if I have seemed ungrateful to you for your kindness. I—I don't know how it is," she broke off impatiently, "I seem to be continually having to beg your pardon for something or other, and I think it is very unpleasant. Mr. Livingston, you are laughing at me again. Really, it is very provoking!"

"How can you expect me not to laugh when you are so very amusing? Now don't get vexed with me again or, upon my word, I will buy a pet buffalo and teach him to follow me about like a dog, merely to frighten you into better behavior," said Arthur mischievously. "But see, I'm as grave as a judge now, if you will only look around at me."

"And you really don't mind my having told Mr. Meredith about going with you last night?"

"I think you were uncommonly plucky to do it. By Jove! I must say I admired you for it; although that does not prevent my thinking it a mistaken fit of frankness on your part."

"It wasn't exactly frankness," said Bell candidly; "or rather, I don't believe I should have been quite so honest if I had not wanted to punish you as well."

CHAPTER V.

GERTY.

" . . . She had
A heart — how shall I say ? — too soon made glad,
Too easily impressed ; she liked whate'er
She looked on, and her looks went everywhere."

GERTY CAMPBELL was putting on her gloves. "Putting on one's gloves" was a phrase which, in Miss Campbell's private vocabulary, implied the attendance of at least one devoted admirer to whom she might hold out her hand with a pretty gesture of helplessness, inviting him to fasten the buttons at her wrist. That the said admirer should shortly after disappear and be heard of no more was quite in accordance with Miss Campbell's past experience. His remaining while withdrawing his admiration, or even bestowing it upon other shrines, was a more unusual episode, but one which she was prepared to meet with cheerful equanimity. "For as I only want to amuse myself, why should they not only want to do the same occasionally ?" she was wont to ask with rare impartiality — "they" representing that admiring masculine element without which Miss Campbell could not comprehend existence.

"Thank you so much, Captain Blake ; — well, Brian, then, — if you will be so foolish. Although you know very well I never promised to call you so more than just that once ! If Kate is ready don't you think we had better start ? The Hamlyns were to leave their boat before nine o'clock, Bell said in the note she sent me, and the sun will be so hot if we wait much longer. I must introduce you to Bell when we meet at Karnak. I know you will admire her awfully, and I quite look

forward to utter neglect and oblivion for my share," she went on, smiling a little dimpling conscious smile which half did away with the effect of the plaintive look in the great gray eyes — those soft deep eyes of hers which were wont to gaze with the same melting tenderness of expression on her last new dress as on her last new lover. "For Gerty's eyes were evidently made, not to see with, but to look out of," Kate Horton had said one day, speaking with all that fine frankness about unpleasant facts which marks the relative, and, "I am sure no one will ever say that about your eyes, dear, though why I should be held responsible if people will be silly about me is more than I can understand," her cousin had retorted with placid good humor.

"I think your friend Miss Hamlyn has just gone up to the Luxor temple," remarked Captain Blake, "at least I saw a young lady and a gentleman going up there a moment ago, and —"

"A gentleman? Oh, yes, that must have been her father of course. Do you think we really need wait for them any longer? They will be an age over that stupid old temple."

"Just as you like. I am at your service in that as in every thing else. If you don't care to wait for Miss Hamlyn, suppose you call your cousin and Tom and we start at once. There! I see Miss Hamlyn at the top of the hill now, crossing over to the small temple. That man with her is not her father at any rate. Can't you see his face? He is quite a young fellow."

"And, as you say, it would not be polite to let them find their way to Karnak alone," said Gerty coolly. "Let us go up and join them in the temple? or — wait! you call Kate, and I will walk on and tell them we are coming. Now am I not good to be so obedient to your advice?" she added, smiling up sweetly at him as she walked away.

Bell was standing in one of the smaller inner chambers of the temple looking at the hieroglyphs.

"There, that one is the Tau, or sign of Life," Living-

ston was saying ; " a curious kind of a cross, isn't it? with a loop instead of the straight bar at the top. They say the early Christians used it half the time instead of—"

" You darling Bell ! how glad I am to see you !" cried a voice behind them out of the darkness. " Not that I can see you in this black hole, but it is so uncommonly nice to know that you are there ! How wicked of you not to have come to see me at once, before going over these horrid old ruins, and—oh ! how do you do, Mr. Hamlyn ? " putting out a hand to Livingston. " It is Mr. Hamlyn, is it not ? one needs to be an owl to be sure of any thing in here ! "

" We were just this instant going to you, Gerty dear, only Mr. Livingston wanted to come here first. Mr. Livingston — Miss Campbell. It is not papa at all, you know ! Hold up that candle, please, Mr. Livingston, and show Gerty whom she is being introduced to, " said Bell ; for the ghastly white daylight that came creeping in through the open door only served to make a dull gray background behind Miss Campbell's pretty face. Livingston raised his light and threw a bright reddish glare on the sculptured walls of the little room ; a glare that moved about and showed him a fair pale face close to his own, two laughing eyes looking straight into his from under a fringe of soft blonde hair, and a smiling mouth with thin flexible red lips that seemed more fit for smiles than kisses.

" How very stupid of me to make such a mistake, " said the owner of the face ; " only it is so dark in here, one can't — Do come outside, Bell. I've a hundred and fifty things to tell you before the others take possession of you. "

" If you will go on ahead, Miss Hamlyn, I will join you at the door in a moment. I only want to find that cartouche of Queen Mautmes before we start for Karnak. "

" And oh, Gerty dear, I am so glad to see you ! " said Bell, as the two girls stood waiting a moment later in the portico. " And do tell me every single thing that has

happened to you since I saw you last in Paris. Have you had lots of fun? Who is here with you? and how — ”

“ Wait a minute, darling,” said Gerty ; “ tell me this first. Who is that gentleman ? ”

“ What, Mr. Livingston? oh, he is a friend of the Merediths,— some charming people we have been travelling with for the last week. Mrs. Meredith is — ”

“ Never mind her! tell me about this Mr. Livingston, — is he nice ? ”

“ Well, I did not think so at first, but I like him very much better now ; — but never mind him ; — I want to know — ”

“ Do you see him every day ? ”

“ Yes,” said Bell shortly.

“ I hope you have not been flirting with him, Bell ? You know I would not interfere with you for the world, but I do so want some one to amuse me in this outlandish place.”

“ You need not be alarmed. There is no danger of interrupting any flirtation between either of us,” Miss Hamlyn answered rather coldly ; “ Mr. Livingston is the last person in the world with whom to associate such an idea, even if I wished to flirt — which I distinctly don’t. We are very good friends, and that is all.”

“ Being ‘good friends’ is very nice sometimes,” said Gerty calmly, “ and there, by the way, comes one of mine, — a nice enough fellow, — but oh, what a goose he can make of himself on occasion ! Hush ! here he is. I am delighted to be able to present you to my dearest friend, — Miss Hamlyn, — Captain Blake. You are both bound to like each other at first sight, you know, under penalty of mortally quarrelling with me.” And it was of course in furtherance of this benevolent scheme for their mutual liking that Miss Campbell instantly left her two friends to cultivate each other’s society in that solitude which

we all know to be so conducive to confidences,—walking quietly down the hill with Livingston, whose remarks seemed to inspire her with the profoundest admiration.

“For, oh, it is so nice to meet some one who really understands these old places, and these old gods and things ; some one who can explain them all without quite despising one for one's ignorance, as my brother Tom does, for instance,” she cried enthusiastically, “Tom and my cousin Kate always go off by themselves, and get into a corner with their 'Murray,' and never will tell me any thing they know. Tom says I am too frivolous, or too stupid, or too something, to understand any thing about the old Egyptians. Do you believe I am so very frivolous, Mr. Livingston ? I should really like to hear your unprejudiced impression of my character. First impressions count for so much, you know,” she added, looking up pleadingly into his face.

“Now I wonder how many hundred times in my life I have heard that very same question and made the very same answer ?” thought Livingston, gazing meanwhile at Gerty with that look of affectionate interest he always bestowed upon a pretty woman. “I dare not risk telling you, Miss Campbell,” he answered aloud. “As you say, first impressions count for so much, and having my character for exactitude to maintain, I'm afraid you would think I was flattering you if I told you what I really thought.”

Gerty smiled. “*Mr. Livingston is the last person in the world with whom to associate the idea of flirtation,*” she repeated to herself, and smiled again.

The modern town of Luxor is built upon a hill. Narrow rows of houses of unburned brick, which can hardly be dignified by the name of streets, lead away from the river front, which the different consulates make gay with fluttering flags, to a small and shabby bazaar and the half-buried ruins of a group of temples.

At one place, looking through the open door of

a native hut, some carved blocks of granite tempted them to enter a courtyard, where they found a dozen dusty cocks and hens contentedly perched about on a shattered row of columns, whose broken capitals, piled one above the other, made a rude stairway by which to reach the upper floor of the house. Farther on they stopped again to wonder over a huge red granite pillar sunk in the earth, and serving as the threshold to a small poverty-stricken coffee shop. Five or six white-bearded, patriarchal-looking old Arabs gazed gravely after them as they passed gayly down the street, half-deafened by the excited barking of the native dogs who followed them, running along the flat roofs of the houses.

At the top of the hill they heard a confused sound of English-speaking voices, and caught sight of the tall obelisk rising high above the crowd of chattering Arabs who surrounded the spot where the Hamlyns, the Merediths, and the two elder Campbells were standing.

Mr. Campbell senior had just enunciated some theory of his own about the probable depth of the earth deposit that covers the temple, as they came up, and, guide-book in hand, was endeavoring to carry his point against the united arguments of Fred Meredith and Mr. Hamlyn.

Mr. Campbell was a thin, short, rather insignificant-looking man of about fifty. Originally intended for the army, family circumstances, the eternal fitness of things, and perhaps his undoubted capacity for arguing in a circle, had induced him to become a barrister instead of a guardsman;—a certain mild enthusiasm for field sports (in which he was always distinguished by a placid and beaming unsuccess), the rather jaunty cut of his shooting-jacket, and a weakness for top-boots, being the only remaining indications of the martial career he had once aspired to.

Never having held a brief in his life, his mind was chiefly devoted to the promotion of homœopathy and the

overthrow of modern science. The modern scientists, he contended, were a pernicious class of men, to be exterminated at any cost before they succeeded in undermining the moral bulwarks of society. Naturally of an amiable disposition, a new book of Huxley's, a new theory of Darwin's, a new adulteration in the quality of his medicines, were facts calculated to move Mr. Campbell to a gentle frenzy of indignation.

Mrs. Campbell had been a county beauty and a Miss Hamilton,—two facts in her career with which few of her acquaintances were not familiar by hearsay. Time had turned the lovely Miss Hamilton into a little, fat, round woman with red cheeks and sparkling eyes; but Time had also given her an occupation in life. Gerty's vagaries could fill but a minor place in a mind already engrossed by the anxieties consequent on the possession of a well-filled linen closet left to the tender mercies of a country housekeeper, and a well-grown son delivered over to the tender mercies of his cousin, Miss Horton. It had been a hard struggle for Mrs. Campbell to determine which of her two objects of interest to abandon for the winter, but love had finally triumphed over linen, and in superintending and regulating her son's affections she had almost ceased to regret her customary autumn manœuvres among her tablecloths.

"And so this is the companion obelisk to the one in Paris," said Kate Horton, coming up the hill; "hold my parasol, Tom, and let me look it out in 'Murray's.'

"Ah, if you only knew what sweet associations that worn old column has for me," sighed Gerty confidentially and pensively to Captain Blake; and then, with a wicked little laugh at his discomfiture, "There is a bonbon shop close by the obelisk in Paris, where Bell and I used to go whenever we went out together," she added, laughing.

"Is it not wonderful to see how much better the hieroglyphs have been preserved here than on the

French column? One could almost believe in a sense of poetic justice on the part of the elements, who will not allow the sacred symbols of old Egypt's mysteries to remain long visible to the curious sceptical Parisian crowd."

"Look, Mr. Merdith," said Bell, pointing to the colossal sitting figure by the side of what was once the main entrance of the temple, "that will show you what I was trying to tell you last night. I believe the Egyptians were the only people who ever expressed the idea of silence in their statues. It is not difficult to accept the story of a Greek Pygmalion; the very Venus of Milo, grand and sorrowfully sweet as she is, might yet be moved to open her full lips, and speak to one in slow sonorous Greek. I believe she did speak to Heine once,—poor Heine! her last and truest worshipper,—but here there seems no possibility of speech. These figures to me express the hopeless inviolate silence of the desert, and seem more godlike as they are less human."

"But godlike without beauty."

"Are they really not beautiful to you, Merdith? They impress me as holding all the beauty and grandeur of irrevocable, unquestionable power, and they have a certain pathos in them too, as though stirred by vague feelings of serene pity over the useless trouble and turmoil of our lives."

"I don't agree with you in the least, my dear fellow. In the first place pathos is a purely modern sentiment. Those old fellows were far too simple-minded for any such investigations into the undercurrents of life."

"What impresses me the most in this Egyptian work," said Tom Campbell thoughtfully, "is the nobility they expressed by mere force of size. Take any colossal modern figure—that overgrown 'Bavaria' at Munich for instance—and see how monstrous you make it before you can make it grand. Perhaps it is because they are not too like humanity,—it may be that they enlist imagination on their side,—but these

figures affect me with the same vague awe as a mountain does, they — ”

Miss Campbell sighed audibly. “Had Mr. Livingston ever read *London Lyrics*?” she asked. “If not, she would be delighted to lend him her copy of that work. For it was discouraging to reflect how impossible it would be for any of them to resemble that delightful heroine of Mr. Locker’s, who contrived to find Rome — or Egypt rather —

‘a charming place
In spite of all the horrid ruins,’

if the gentlemen intended to make a practice of talking a mile above our heads.”

Mr. Livingston had not been aware that such a discourtesy was possible. Hitherto he had been under the impression that angels were provided with wings.

“That is so like Gerty,” her brother remarked, in a tone of profound disgust. “I do believe women were created for my especial — ”

“For your especial — what, Tom?” asked Miss Horton.

Mr. Campbell considered that one of them — whom he would not particularize — had been created with reference to his especial happiness.

“I think if you have seen every thing you wanted to see, — and as our other donkeys are ready now, — we might as well start?” Miss Horton remarked, turning to Gerty and Bell. And they had fairly arrived at Karnak before she understood the shout of laughter which greeted her innocent suggestion.

The road from Luxor crosses a stretch of wheat-sown fields, past a few tall waving groups of palms, to a wide avenue, on either side of which a row of formless mutilated blocks of stone show where a procession of sphinxes, half a mile in length, once led up to the stately propylon of the temple of Karnak.

They dismounted in the shade of the first great arch and wandered on among the ruins, passing through

halls filled with massive granite columns, fretted with hieroglyphs and beautiful with never-ending lines of ancient gods and goddesses ; clambering over fallen blocks and prostrate capitals, until they emerged on a wide uneven expanse of glaring white sand, across which a hundred narrow foot-tracks led to that farther temple where stands the famous Hall of Columns.

A long triple row of gigantic pillars opens out, like the solemn aisle of a pine wood, on either side of the soft wet path, at the farther end of which, obelisk after obelisk rises from amid what seem the ruins of a primeval world. Wide blocks of stone sixty or seventy feet in length bridge the spaces between the columns overhead ; here, one of these blocks has fallen to the ground, and lies all carved and painted on the water-soaked earth ; farther on, two of the mighty piles have started from their place and lean irresolute against each other, as though waiting for some shock of sound to pierce the blue stillness of the sky and bid them end their fall. At the outer end of the hall a chaos of rough hewn stones lies heaped and piled about in monstrous confusion, reaching to where — far, far away — a small thin obelisk, grown small and delicate by distance, marks the boundary line of that last mass of ruins which shows the limit of Karnak's farthest temple.

"It is too grand to talk in here, let us go outside," said Bell.

"Come and look at this nearest obelisk," suggested Livingston ; "that is a monument which ought especially to endear itself to the feminine mind. It was built by one Amun Nitocris, the wife and queen of Tothmosis the Second. She was the first strong-minded member of her lovely sex — if we except our mother Eve — and is represented in a man's costume to symbolize the general independence of her ideas."

"Oh, where is 'Murray'? Wait a moment and I will look out the cartouch for you," said Kate.

"Come here behind these columns and I will show

you something more curious still," said Meredith. "On the other side of this hall is a gigantic figure of Shishack the Conqueror, cutting off the heads of a row of captives taken in battle, and tied together by their hair. But, for my part, I think this tree with the serpent is the strangest thing in Karnak. Do you know, Mr. Campbell, that some people argue from it an Egyptian derivation for the whole history of the Fall of Man, saying that 'the temptation of woman by the serpent and of man by the woman is but a symbol of the Egyptian opinion that celibacy was more holy than marriage'? The sacred tree of knowledge, and the cherubs guarding with flaming swords the gate of the garden, may all be repeatedly found upon the sculptured monuments of the Egyptians, according to Sharpe."

"I've no doubt of it, no doubt of it, sir," said Mr. Campbell indignantly, "there are few considerations of public morality left strong enough to check the unallowed suggestions of the writers who cater for the literary appetite of this unfortunate age. Attacking Adam and Eve! Good heavens! what will they be at next? Mark my words, Mr. Meredith, the time is coming when—"

"Do come away, Bell," whispered Gerty; "let us go back and look at those first propylons again; I did not half see them as we came through, and we shall have no time to look at any thing if we wait here until papa and Mr. Meredith have settled the universe between them."

"I should like to see this place by moonlight," said Bell, pausing to look back at the long stately avenue of columns; "fancy how the white radiance of the moon must come pouring in through those openings overhead, and how the tall long shadows lie—so still and solemn—stretching in endless lines across the ground like a procession of black-robed figures mourning for Karnak's overthrow."

"How awfully wet this ground is," said Kate practi-

cally, "I wonder why? the water surely cannot reach to here?"

"It does at the overflow," answered Livingston, "all this part of the temple is covered a foot or two deep when the Nile is at its height. That is the reason the pillars are so stained and eaten about the base, and so sunken in places. Some day the water will conquer, and the pride of Karnak will reel and fall prone upon the earth."

"'Tis fled. The mighty columns are but sand,
And lazy snakes trail o'er the level ruins,'"

quoted Tom Campbell absently. "I wish Coleridge had come to Egypt, Livingston. He is the only modern man I know of who could have expressed it entirely, with a large simplicity and fulness of epithet. Think what he could have written of the Nile, remembering the magnificent sweep of those lines of his,—

"where Alph, the sacred river, ran,
Through caverns measureless to man,
Down to a sunless sea."

"For my part, I like the idea of the Nile's coming here," said Bell; "you may call it a treacherous undermining of the temple if you choose, but I think it is rather the faithful yearly return of the great old god, who, more constant than all his dead worshippers, comes year after year to wreath with water-plants his empty, ruined altars."

"So that, like all other too constant lovers, old Nilus ends by wearing out the endurance of the object of his affection," said Livingston lightly. "I hope you take warning by his example, Miss Campbell, and restrain any propensity to too great constancy."

"Do you really think one can be too constant?" asked Gerty with a soft quick blush. She had not been listening to a word they had said, in spite of the deep questioning of her glance. But the great law of compensation seems to govern even in this. There is

a whole class of women born to express by looks what others suffer for and feel.

"Oh dear! what hard work it is walking in this hot sand," she sighed; "how I wish somebody would come and hold my parasol for me."

She glanced at Livingston as she spoke, but the smile with which she welcomed Captain Blake's prompt offer of service was enough to convince any man that it was to him her remark had been addressed; for Gerty Campbell possessed to a high degree that invaluable quality, the power of entire self-absorption in whatever she had in hand.

She walked leisurely across the wide irregular plain to the first temple, and there sat down in the shadow to watch the others come toiling through the sun.

"Do you see that pool of water there, Miss Hamlyn? I fancy that must have been the death lake of this temple, the water across which dead bodies were carried by the priests before burial to symbolize that other crossing which awaited the soul brought before the Forty-two Assessors, in the presence of Osiris, the Judge. That is the custom from which the Greeks derived their myth of Charon's boat across the Styx. Each temple had its sacred lake, and here at Thebes the bodies had to cross over the river as well before reaching their rock-bound city of the dead."

"When you come to think of it, you can hardly understand how the old Egyptians ever found time to be such jolly old fellows as they evidently were," said Campbell. "They must have spent their entire energies in the cheerful occupation of preparing their own tombs and burying their friends. They were rather more consistent after all than we are, who, professing to recognize the inevitability of death, practically treat it like an unpleasant incident, to refer to which is the height of bad taste."

"I wonder if those old fellows were not half right in their theories of life, or rather of life-in-death?" asked Arthur. "Certainly by never forgetting death they seem

most effectually to have forgotten to fear it. What do you say about it, Miss Hamlyn?"

"Oh, never mind that just now, Mr. Livingston," said Gerty, rising as they came in out of the glare, "I do so want you to come and explain this to me? You know you promised to teach me all about these old gods," she added as they walked away together: for although Miss Campbell was far too sincere and universal a flirt ever to find time for such an inconvenient emotion as jealousy, she was none the less disposed to resent any particular attention paid to any one else in her presence,—or, if not to resent it, at least to prevent its repetition.

An hour later Bell was sitting alone upon a fallen block of granite just inside one of the propylons. Before her a pile of rubbish—broken fragments of stone and sand—rose in a steep inclined plane to the top of the wall. On her right, and underneath the shelter of an arch, was another wall, pierced with two doors and emblazoned with some of the most perfect and beautiful hieroglyphs which Karnak has to show. Over one dark opening stood the fair girl-goddess Athor, the full moon supported between the branching horns of her head-dress; over the other door sat Re, the hawk-headed god of the Sun, and between them both hung endless rows of water-plants and birds. Strange geometrical-looking forms enclosed in deep-cut oval shields, and branches of wide-open lotus-blossoms with drooping buds covered the wall in beautiful and fantastic tracery.

"'Murray' says these cuttings are from four to nine inches deep, and remarkable as belonging to the finest epoch of Egyptian art," said Miss Horton, as she passed by where Bell was sitting.

"Are you tired already, Miss Hamlyn?" asked Captain Blake. "What a pity you can't have a cup of tea to refresh you. You ought not to be tired so soon though; Miss Campbell is still climbing about on the top of the propylon out there with Mr. Livingston, as comfortable as you please. Charming girl, Miss Campbell! Have you known her long?"

Captain Blake was a good-humored young Irishman, with a fine tenor voice, a decided talent for brilliant water-color sketching, and a fatal facility for talking about himself. Sitting down beside Miss Hamlyn, within twenty minutes he had put her in possession of all the leading facts of his life. Within half-an-hour she knew all about his mamma's love for Souchong tea — "a taste that runs in the family," — her maiden name, with a short illustrative sketch of her old home in Killarney, — the amount of his own income, — the address of his favorite frame-maker in London, — and the reasons which had induced him to leave the army ; including a comprehensive *résumé* of his prospects in life, tastes, and intentions. Then, turning to more impersonal themes, he favored Bell with interesting particulars about some half-dozen intimate friends, — Captain Blake's friends were always "intimate" ones, — not forgetting the curt biographical sketch of his "last flirtation but one," a fascinating lady friend at whose place in the country he had just been staying. "Lovely little creature — weak chest ; such a pity ! Such a house ! — perfect. palace ! — blue rooms, green rooms, ball rooms, billiard rooms ! She lost a pint of blood from her lungs this year after dancing until seven o'clock in the morning ; — sweet creature ! There are embroidered damask curtains at every window all over the house. Dear little boy — died a month ago ; — got the letter telling me of it at Cairo — mother quite inconsolable. All the silver is marked with her own crest. She was an O'Brian, you see, and there is an extinct barony in the family. My own grandfather was a Brian O'Brian and so, you understand — "

" Oh yes, exactly. I understand quite well now, thank you," said Bell desperately. " It is really very good of you to stay here and amuse me so nicely, Captain Blake ; but I cannot help feeling it is awfully selfish of me to keep you so long away from the others."

" Now that is what I call a nice kind of girl," thought Blake approvingly. " Well, if you don't really mind my

leaving you here alone for a minute, perhaps I had better go and look the others up," he said aloud. "If we are to get back in time for dinner at all to-day we must be off before long."

Miss Hainly drew a long breath of relief, and leaned wearily back against the cool stone wall behind her, as she listened to the sound of his retreating footsteps. "No wonder Gerty is so glad to get Mr. Livingston to talk to, if *that* is the kind of thing she has heard for the last fortnight," she said to herself with a comical smile over her own discomfiture; a smile that ended abruptly in a long unreasonable sigh.

"I wish one did not get so soon accustomed to pleasant things. Any one would miss any one else whom they had seen so often as I have seen Mr. Livingston of late," she added to herself in vague justification of the feeling of blankness which seemed to fill her life just then.

Meantime the afternoon shadows were lengthening in the sun. The line of sky above the sharp square edge of the archway was growing of a deeper, darker blue. The sunlight slowly fell from off the further wall and slowly crept across the yellow sand-heap under foot. Now and then the distant shouts of the little troop of vagabond children who haunt the ruins of Karnak, looking for relics in the shifting sand and extorting backsheesh from the unwary howadji — now and then the distant echo of their cries came floating softly to her from the farther temple. And then again the stillness fell about her — a stillness so intense, it rested like some spell around the motionless drooping figure of the girl. She sat so long and so quietly there that she ceased to be an object of suspicion to the troop of little sparrows who had their nests among the hieroglyphs on the wall and darted ceaselessly in and out, now alighting in a row upon the outstretched arm of an Isis; now starting off, a sudden cloud and flutter of wings, or pursuing each other with sweet shrill twittering through the still afternoon.

Bell had fallen into a day-dream, and not a pleasant one at that, to judge by the look of weariness and doubt that had settled on her face, or the quick half-frown with which she looked suddenly up at the sound of footsteps coming from between the columns in the hall behind her.

"At last!" said Livingston, speaking in a loud glad voice. "Do you know, I began to believe I never was going to find you at all, Miss Hamlyn? I might have known that you would have discovered the best and the quietest spot of all."

He threw himself down on the sand at her feet with a deep sigh of relief.

"Heaven deliver me from ever visiting another ruin with a mob of people," he said with profound earnestness.

Bell laughed. A quick reaction from the desponding thoughts of a moment before sent the warm blood dancing through her veins, and filled her eyes with a mischievous light, as she said demurely,

"What an ungrateful speech, Mr. Livingston, and how extremely insincere! You can't expect me to sympathize with you in the least, after having heard Captain Blake's account of the festive manner in which you and Gerty have been 'running about the propylons' for the last two hours."

"Was it only two hours? Are you sure? Well, 'the laborer is worthy of his hire!' I forgive Captain Blake his slander in consideration of the rest I am now enjoying, thanks to his tardy interruption of my *ete-à-tête*."

"Where did you leave Gerty, by the way?"

"In the Hall of Columns, discussing croquet with Captain Blake. I believe it was the mace in the hands of an Amun-Re, that looked something like a mallet, which started the subject, and when I left they were already too deeply interested to notice my departure. Miss Horton and the devoted Tom are looking out cartouches on the wall from the list given in 'Murray,' and

the others are all more or less asleep in different parts of the ruins."

He sprang up as he spoke, and brushed the sand from his hand before offering it to Bell.

"Come, Miss Hamlyn," he said, making her rise from her seat, "I have a treat in store for you. I know your weakness for solitary excursions, and I am going to show you something I have discovered, and which is to be a profound secret between you and me."

Behind the temple, at the very edge of the grassy plain, stand a few rudely-built houses of unburnt brick. Two old men, with what looked like a bundle of fagots, were waiting for them at the door of one of these huts. Bell passed in, and at first, dazzled by the outer glare, could distinguish nothing but some vague white forms, that started violently from their places at her approach, and rushed heavily about the room.

"It is nothing. Don't be frightened. This is only the stable, and those are the two horses and the one white cow of the village," said Arthur quickly; "don't be alarmed, Miss Hamlyn, there is not a buffalo in the place. I found that out before I brought you here. Stand still a moment now, and the men will light the torches."

As he spoke, the bunches of dried palm-branches sprang aflame and blazed up suddenly, flinging a flare of yellow light into the farthest corners of the stable, half-filled with broken ploughs and worn-out harness, and showing a square, black hole in the wall, the entrance to a small inner chamber.

"Stoop low as you enter, Miss Hamlyn. I am taking you into the presence chamber of one who, in her day, was counted greater than the gods. Somewhere on these walls is the last authentic portrait of Cleopatra."

It was a small, square room, with a high ceiling and walls of sculptured stone. As the men held high the flaming torches, fair, girlish faces, with sweetly smiling mouths, looked down at them, as though eager to meet

the light ; strange figures of fantastic shape started suddenly forward from out the darkness ; a long row of hawk-headed gods were stiffly ranged along the wall, while here and there a slender rounded arm or high-arched sandalled foot peeped out from beneath the thick, black coating left by the smoke of former torches. The flickering, swaying blaze threw huge, distorted shadows up against the ceiling, but could only illumine some few square inches at a time.

"I am afraid we shall have to give it up, after all," said Livingston, as the last torch sank lower and sputtered in the dampness.

As he spoke, the dying fire caught at the dry handle of twisted palm, the man dashed the kindling torch upon the floor, and a sudden flame leaped high, with a wide flare of light that rested full upon a graceful, girlish profile crowned with old Egypt's double crown, lit up a round, full, outstretched arm, and played about a long, drooping lotus-bud held in that "flower-soft hand"

"that kings
Have lipped, and trembled kissing."

It was all they ever saw of Cleopatra.

"Why, how now, Charmon ?
Our lamp is spent, 'tis out,"

quoted Livingston under his breath. "Give me your hand, Miss Hamlyn, and let us find our way back into real life. 'There's witchcraft in this place.' I'm glad I came here alone with you."

"Yes ; I am glad we saw it together," answered Bell.

CHAPTER VI.

DE PROFUNDIS.

“This world is but a sleep and a forgetting.
The soul that rises with us, — our life’s star, —
Hath had elsewhere its setting,
And cometh from afar.”

“TWO for you, Tom. One of them is a bill, — I know the style of envelope. Three for Miss Horton ; another one for you, Miss Campbell — a nice thick one this time ; and four, five, six, for the Merediths. Livingston got all his half-an-hour ago, so you and I, Miss Hamlyn, are the only ones left out in the cold ; not a word for either of us. For my part, I am devoutly thankful not to have any answers to write, but I am afraid you will be disappointed. Young ladies always enjoy receiving letters.”

“Put me down as an exception to the rule then, Captain Blake. I don’t in the least care about hearing from any one to-day.”

“Why, Bell, it was only last night I heard you wishing for the steamer to come in and bring the mail. You were fretting so about it, I thought you were quite wild to hear from somebody or other, and sent Captain Blake off to the office before breakfast principally that you might not have to wait for your letters until our return this evening.”

“That was very good of you, dear,” answered Bell lightly, “only don’t you see I happen to share Captain Blake’s antipathy to writing answers. I suppose it never occurred to you that I wanted the mail to come in chiefly to be sure that it was bringing me nothing at all ? And now that that anxiety is off my mind and the rest of you

are satisfied in a different way, why should we not start? You know we have a hard day's work before us if we sail to-morrow."

"Everyone is ready, I think," said Campbell. "Come Kate, you can finish your letters in the boat crossing over. The luncheon baskets are all right, I suppose, Abdallah? Has everybody got every thing then? — oh, there is my opera-glass on the table; just bring it along with you, Blake, as you get in, and — let me see; — Mr. Hamlyn is not coming with us, I believe."

"No. Papa and Mr. Campbell have gone over for a last look at Karnak."

"Then everybody is here except Livingston. Somebody call Livingston. I say, Blake, you saw him last; where did you leave him?"

"He is writing letters in his cabin, and sends word we are not to wait for him. He will come over in the little *sandal* and join us later," answered Meredith from the other boat.

"All right then. Go ahead there!" said Campbell, turning to the sailors. The long clumsy oars struck the water with a splash, and the two boats rowed off together, the men chanting a rude chorus, pulling hard against the stream that the current might not carry them too far below the landing place.

They were nearly half over before Tom Campbell's exclamation of surprise made them all look around. "I say, Gerty, did you know this?" he asked, and handed her over an open letter folded down at a particular passage. Miss Campbell read it slowly through. "Yes; I had heard something about it before," she answered calmly. What was it, any way? Miss Horton was anxious to know. "Oh, merely that Sir Frederick is coming to Egypt in the spring in Henry Alston's yacht," her cousin answered quietly, but with a certain subdued exultation in voice and manner. There was something fairly contagious in the quality of Miss Campbell's overflowing good spirits that day. It was, — "by Jove! it was the prettiest sight he had seen for a

century," Captain Blake confided to himself in a sudden fit of enthusiasm, and "I'd give ten pounds to know what mischief that absurd little witch is planning now," Mr. Meredith remarked to his wife. It seems hardly necessary to add that he was properly rebuked for the unjustifiable nature of any such curiosity.

A dozen donkeys, saddled and bridled, and hung about with party-colored tassels and trappings, were ready for them on the other side. At least twenty boys and men were clamoring on the beach, waiting for the howadji to come ashore, and almost knocking their dilapidated donkeys into the water in their frantic efforts for precedence.

"I don't want any of these, Abdallah," Miss Hamlyn remarked, turning to the dragoman as three or four of the rival competitors pressed around her, curbing in their donkeys to make them prance, and kneeling on the sand to offer her a step to mount from, "I want the same little girl I had yesterday — Fatmeh. Where is Fatmeh?"

Fatmeh was a pretty little creature, eight or nine years old, dressed in a bit of brown sacking folded about her with two slits for the slender brown arms to come through. Each wrist was decorated with a narrow silver band, and about her throat she wore a thick necklace of what seemed rows of palest amber beads, but proved to be but a string of glistening yellow kernels of dried corn. On her head she balanced a tall water-bottle, held in place by a little leather pad, and in her hand she carried the rod of office, a long pointed stick, with which to prod the unfortunate donkey committed to her care.

Ten minutes' ride over a plain of soft white river sand, across which the donkeys stumbled and staggered heavily, led them to the margin of a wide creek or inland lake, the last remaining vestige of the overflow.

It was a heavy load, and the unwieldy boat drifted but slowly to the other side; a weather-beaten, brown old man and his two sons pushing it on with crooked

sticks and poles. Once over, they mounted again, receiving large additions to their suite of ragged followers, for on this side begins the reign of the sellers of antiquities picked up among the ruins, and a clamorous troop of men and women were soon about them, having long strings of pale blue beads; rough blue images of misshapen gods in shiny porcelain; small alabaster vases of ointment, closed and sealed; or brown and wrinkled hands and feet, torn from the mummies and still wrapped in yellow strips of linen, stiff and stained by the drugs with which they had been saturated.

"Why not buy some, Campbell?" asked Meredith, holding up a long string of scarabaei, which a tall grave man had just produced for their examination; leaving his plough standing in the field while he took from an inner pocket in his loose blue shirt the row of sacred beetles, standing by, staring at them with eager glittering eyes as they fingered over his wares.

"Do you think they are real antiques then? You know more than the rest of us about those things."

"*Aowa, antica, antica, ya howadji,*" said the peasant hoarsely, pressing forward, catching at the only word he could understand and speaking with savage insistence.

"Antiques? My dear fellow, of course not. You won't find one authentic one in five hundred. I only thought you might care to encourage your native British industry by buying a few. These are all Manchester manufacture, and very well done indeed."

A narrow bridle path crosses that portion of the Theban plain, winding along through wide green fields of grass and flowering beans. They moved on slowly at foot pace, in a long single file; and slowly, as they rode on, the great statues of the Colossi lifted their old forgotten majesty above the level of the fields, until their mournful presence seemed to dominate the day, and the vast plain about them and the wide amphitheatre of hills beyond was but a fitting background for those two lonely figures towering up against the blue.

Medeenet Haboo lies far away to the left of the pair ; a great ruined temple, less gigantic in scale but less shattered in its different parts than Karnak. Here high wide propylons open on courtyards ranged about with solemn rows of strange Osiride figures, with great arms meekly folded across their breasts ; covered galleries starred with gold and roofed with pale bright blue that almost seems a portion of the cloudless sky above ; and here are walls covered with endless processions of figures—kings in their war-chariots, captives biting the dust, or high assemblies of the gods receiving sacred tribute. It was her third or fourth visit to the temple, and Bell did not linger in these outer halls, but walked straight through to an inner court, where all the space was filled with the huge drums of enormous columns razed half way to the ground. Beyond it, high up against the temple wall, were the ruined houses of those early Christians who had wrought this devastation — houses of unburnt brick clinging like so many hornets' nests to the roof. Farther on a few small painted chambers still standing, fresh and vivid as though finished but yesterday ; bright with fruit and flowers, and fantastic with a border of small caped and hooded monkeys, brilliant as the illuminations in some quaint old missal.

Bell climbed up on one of the great fragments of a column and stretched herself out full length on its smooth round surface, looking lazily up at the blue overhead, idly tracing out the deep-cut hieroglyphs on the old gray walls about her, or listening to the distant sound of voices that hardly seemed to stir the heavy stillness of the place.

Miss Campbell and Captain Blake had lingered in the outer court. "I have not really seen any thing of you at all this last week," she was saying half reproachfully ; "of course I cannot quarrel with you for preferring to talk to Bell—isn't she a perfect darling ? I am, oh, so fond of her!—but still—one misses one's friends, you know."

"Does one really? It hasn't looked much like it though," answered Blake in an aggrieved voice, swinging his stick against the face of a prostrate Isis; "I had rather not be missed in that way, if it's all the same to you, particularly when it is all your own fault. I haven't been able to see you for five minutes alone since that fellow Livingston came."

"And how is it my fault, I should like to know? Was it I last night who would not sing and would go off walking with Tom, while all the rest of us were spending the evening on deck?" asked Gerty sweetly, leaning back with a pleased little smile, her blonde young head resting caressingly against the grim face of a Rameses sculptured on the wall.

The situation was a pleasant one for Miss Campbell. The day was hot, she was glad to rest in the shade, contentedly conscious of a picturesque attitude, and contemplating with the friendly amusement of superior skill the sulky young man lounging on a block of fallen stone at her feet.

"Suppose we agree that you are terribly unreasonable and exacting," she suggested with a smile, "and then, you know, I will forgive you for it all if you only ask me to do so nicely."

"And you will promise to give a fellow a chance to speak to you occasionally without that confounded Livingston being always in the way?"

"Poor Mr. Livingston! How little he dreams of the extent of his transgressions. Well,—agreed. But you are to be good and obedient then, and not be cross if I ask you to do something for me."

"Try me and see," said Brian eagerly.

"Very well. Bell is all alone in there—no! you are quite wrong. She does not 'prefer' being alone any more than I do, and I really must go and do the polite to Mrs. Meredith. Mamma especially charged me to be nice to her to-day."

"But you are always sending me off to Miss Hamlyn."

"Well, and what if I am? Isn't my own pet friend nice enough to—"

"Oh, nice enough for any thing of course, only—she is not you."

"And a very good thing for her, I'm sure! Bell is a thousand times nicer and better and dearer than I am!" cried Gerty, with most becoming enthusiasm; "I'm sure you ought to be very much honored by my letting you be with her so much. Now are you going? You can see for yourself that there is no Mr. Livingston here for you to be, to be—oh—to be foolish about," she added laughing as Blake slowly rose and went in, though not without a long backward glance at his charmer.

"A nice fellow, but he is beginning to bore me awfully," thought that candid young lady with a half-stifled yawn. "Oh—dear—me! Well! I suppose I must go and listen to Mrs. Meredith's ravings about these horrid, stupid old ruins! what a nuisance it is to have to move while it is so hot! Let me see, where is she now?" looking vaguely round, "that must be her blue dress there, between the columns. I shall have a dress like that when I go back to England, only I'll have mine made with two flounces instead of one, and I don't think I'll have it trimmed with white; plain Oxford blue is so awfully becoming to me."

She rose slowly to her feet and stood still a moment looking back across the plain.

"I wonder how much longer it will be before Mr. Livingston—oh!" She hesitated an instant and then sat down again with a smile. "That's what I call a stroke of good luck. I can't be mistaken a second time," she added to herself, arranging her dress carefully about her and then taking a protracted survey of the tip of her foot. "How one does wear out one's things climbing over these rocks. These boots will be quite shabby soon," she murmured regretfully.

"All alone, Miss Campbell, and meditating among the tombs?"

Miss Campbell looked up with a start.

"Oh, you quite frightened me," she said, giving him the frank glad welcome of her eyes ; "is that really you at last? I thought you were never, never coming?"

Livingston laughed. "What made you look so solemn, perched up there?" he demanded ; "I mistook you for the tragic muse of the place when I first caught sight of you."

"Did I look sad? That is strange ; for I was thinking—" She hesitated.

"Thinking of what?"

"Thinking principally of you—or at least, of something connected with you," she answered slowly.

"And may I not know what it was?"

She turned her large gray eyes upon him with a kindly, half-pitying glance.

"No. I cannot tell you."

Then rising as he threw himself down in the shadow of the gateway, "Shall I show you where the others are?" she asked, with a sudden return to the smiling sunniness of her usual manner.

"Yes, by the way, that reminds me—I've got something here for Miss Hamlyn," said Arthur, springing to his feet. "Where is she? How is it you are not together? I thought you aimed at being inseparable."

"I never stay where I am not wanted if I can possibly help it," answered Gerty carelessly. "Where is Bell? I hardly know. Suppose we look for Captain Blake."

"Jealous, by Jove!" thought Arthur.

"Is that the surest indication of Miss Hamlyn's whereabouts?" he asked aloud.

"Have you not noticed it then?" speaking with some surprise ; "oh, I am sorry I spoke. How very stupid of me ; particularly so after what Bell told me this morning. I do hope you will forget it, Mr. Livingston. It is only a fancy of mine after all, you know. Bell never said any thing to me about Captain Blake except just that once."

"And what did Miss Hamlyn say then? I am curious, Miss Campbell. That is one of my many defects."

"Oh, she said — nothing! I wish I had not told you any thing about it, for now you will always believe it was more than it really was."

"I shall certainly make a point of thinking so, unless you consent to gratify my curiosity. Come, — I am really quite in earnest about it, — won't you tell me?" he said, stopping short and suddenly facing her with a steady glance.

But it was not without purpose that Miss Campbell had cultivated the elusive faculties of her sex. At the present moment she chose to answer Mr. Livingston with a smile so bright, so good-humored, and withal so full of a certain mischievous insinuation, that the young man felt himself redder to the roots of his hair. "Of course I was only joking. Of course it is not any earthly business of mine," he said hastily. "Of course not," Miss Campbell assented with demure propriety, and the most irresistibly joyous of laughs. But before they parted at the gate she had made another appeal. "You are not angry with me?" she said plaintively, with another full glance of those wonderful gray eyes; "you are not angry with me for speaking about Captain Blake and Bell?" If Mr. Livingston's disclaimer was rather more energetic than the occasion required, some allowance may be made for the natural impressionability of man. But it must be admitted that Miss Campbell was enjoying herself.

Meanwhile Miss Hamlyn had wandered away from her favorite corner, and, with Captain Blake's assistance, and partly to avoid the trouble of talking to him, had climbed the broken staircase in the wall, and now stood on the highest platform of the temple roof, looking across the wide green plain of Thebes, to where the Nile lay glittering in the sun.

"This is the place from which the Egyptian priests

used to watch the approach of their enemies. Mr. Livingston told me all about it the other day. They used their temples for fortresses as well," remarked Kate Horton, leaning over the inner parapet and looking down on the heads of the Osirides in the court below.

"Fancy standing here while a long procession wound across that plain carrying a dead king to his sepulchre among the hills," said Bell dreamily. "I can almost imagine I hear the chanting of the crowd, I can see the flash of the chariot wheels in the sunlight and the white fluttering robes of the long line of priests. Think how—"

"Why, here is Mr. Livingston, Bell? When did he come?" asked Kate.

Miss Hamlyn did not answer. "What a perfect, what a heavenly day this is!" she said a moment later, raising her happy face and smiling up into the blue depths of sky.

"I owe you such an apology, Miss Hamlyn," said Livingston as he reached the terrace where they were standing; "I don't know if you will ever forgive me, and I can assure you I am seriously annoyed at myself about it; but the fact is, when I went to the post-office this morning the clerk gave me this for you," taking a letter from his pocket-book. "It had been forgotten when they made up the mail for your dahabeah, and I meant to have brought it to you at once, but some important business letters that I received and had to answer drove the whole matter out of my mind. I forgot it entirely. I hope you will try and pardon my carelessness. For, indeed, you would not have got this at all before you stopped at Thebes on your way down again had I not happened to discover it."

Miss Hamlyn held out her hand for the letter with the most reassuring unconcern. Had Mr. Livingston not found it very hot crossing the plain? How had he managed about the boat? And why did he— She looked carelessly at the handwriting on the envelope

and a sudden blankness stole across her glance. There was something curious in the sudden faltering of her voice. There was something peculiar in the dubious laugh with which she looked up into Livingston's face. It was not, she remarked casually, an important letter. On the contrary. Indeed letters were a great bore as a general rule. But perhaps—she was so heedless herself about losing such trifles—perhaps Mr. Livingston would kindly take charge of it for her until their return to the boat? The manner in which she handed it to him was suggestive of a repugnance singularly out of relation with the inoffensiveness of the epistle. "And—how unbearable that sun is getting to be!" Miss Hamlyn added a moment later. "Do you know, Captain Blake, I'm positively sick of this monotony of fine weather. There is nothing more tiresome than a perfectly cloudless day."

Behind the temple of Medeenet Haboo stretches a bare and desolate plain, which rises and climbs until it merges itself in the bare and desolate range of the Lybian hills.

The hot sun glared mercilessly down on the long straggling line of riders as they plodded wearily up the steep ascent, their poor thin little donkeys stumbling helplessly over the loose stones, and being forcibly pushed and dragged into, and over, all sorts of impossible places, until they were finally left at the foot of a cliff where the foot-path took a sharper incline, winding along between the empty mummy-pits.

The light dust rose in choking clouds about them at each step, until they were glad to sit down for a moment and take long draughts of the sweet Nile water from little Fatmeh's jar. From their present height they looked on an amphitheatre of desolate desert enclosed in a circle of bare and barren cliffs. The whole landscape was of a hot tawny color—brown hills, brown sand, brown rocks—over whose steep and sun-baked slopes a few brown sheep were crawling slowly along, finding a scanty pasturage of dry and shrivelled grass

among the stones, — herded by bare and brown-skinned boys whose only dress was the amulet strung on a row of beads about their necks and some tattered fluttering rag of tawny brown. Overhead the intense blue of the noonday sky burnt like a jewel in the sun.

High above them the rock was pierced and honey-combed with thousands of empty tombs. Long strips of mummy-cloth lay upon the ground. Shapeless and shrivelled fragments — hands or feet torn off and thrown aside in the search for treasure — were scattered all about. Here and there a blackened skull, and once, a stiff black mass of braided hair were lying in their path.

"It is all utterly horrible," said Margaret, with a sigh of disgust. "What is this place, Fred? and why did you bring me here?"

"The place is one where I expect to come every day next month, so you might as well get accustomed to it beforehand, dear. This is where we shall come for our excavations. It is the burial-ground of the people, the Potter's Field of the lower classes of Egyptians," answered Meredith, "but higher up there is a temple you ought to see, and some fine painted tombs. Here, down below, the rock was friable and porous, and so given over by the priests to the use of the poor."

"How utterly different these plains of *débris* about Thebes are to the real Desert," said Bell. "In fact they are not real sand at all, but dust and rubbish; a brutal, hideous soil not for a moment to be called by the same name as that wide golden sea of the Lybian waste or the long, level, wind-swept plain at the foot of the Sphinx."

"Here is Dayh el Bahree at last. Come in out of that terrible heat and rest before you look at the carvings."

"I am not going to look at any thing more to-day," said Gerty, sitting down in the coolest corner and throwing off her hat. "Oh, that awful dust! I know I never shall get my cheeks cool again. What on

earth is there to see here worth all that dreadful climb, Mr. Livingston?"

"Principally this cartoon of the soul of man in the presence of the Forty-two Assessors. It is the Egyptian idea of the Judgment after death, the trial of the man's acts and feelings in this life. If you had profited as much as you ought to have done, Miss Campbell, by all my eloquent discourses on the subject, you would think nothing of that climb in comparison with the pleasure of clearing up such a theological point of the old Egyptian creed. I'm afraid you have not got the true spirit of the Egyptologist as yet. You ought to take example from Miss Horton."

"Oh, Kate takes her temples like a sandwich, between two slices of 'Murray.' I haven't that style of appetite. I believe Kate's only object in travelling is to verify the statements of the guide-books. I wish you could see her 'doing' Switzerland with—"

"I wish I could see you doing any thing half so well, Gerty. Whatever else you may travel for, it certainly is not for instruction," said Tom Campbell.

"What a grave, mild, innocent face that Isis has over the door," remarked Mrs. Meredith. "Did you ever notice that one never sees an old face or any signs of age among the Egyptian figures? They are all—gods, kings, or captives—eternally adolescent, as though age had no part to play in those happy days when man and the world were young together."

'Near by the temple stood a row of painted tombs, creeping into which through holes broken in the wall, they entered long corridors whose plaster-covered sides and roof were glowing with vivid color. Here—holding high their torches—they saw the whole life of an old Egyptian emblazoned on his tomb. In one panel the ripe grain was falling under the sickles of a band of slaves watched over by their master; next to it, a curious boat, carved in fantastic devices at stern and prow, shaded with golden awnings and filled with a stately company, sailed across the lake of a pleasure

garden, whose strange, accurately drawn trees and flowers reminded one of the work of the Japanese. Farther on was a scene of the chase,—long thin-legged greyhounds coursing a gazelle. About each panel thick wreaths of water-plants twisted their drooping leaves, and knots of lotus-buds and blossoms were tangled on the wall.

“Poor fellow, how fond he was of flowers! Do you know, I am positively beginning to pity the man who built this tomb. He is so awfully dead now, and he seems to have cared so much for the pleasant things of life!”

“I like the idea of having a beautiful-hall like this built at the entrance of one’s grave—a sort of reception room for the friends and relatives of the dead. It was a good plan. One stood a better chance of being remembered in those days.”

“And in these smaller rooms I suppose they kept the materials for the sacrifices?” asked Kate Horton. “There is the most wonderful figure of a man with a guitar here, Tom; come and see it,” she said, holding her candle closer to the wall.

“I wish you could see yourselves from where I am,” remarked Livingston, “you are all so immensely picturesque with that long line of moving lights twinkling like stars through the darkness; but is not everybody half suffocated? The air is fearfully close. I am not sure Miss Campbell was not right in refusing to come in.”

“I think we must go into this one more. It looks so nice and difficult,” said Kate, as they came out into the open air again, pointing to a smaller aperture than usual. “See how the sand has drifted in the opening. I don’t believe it will be possible to enter it in a few days more. Come, Bell, you and I are the only ones left fresh enough to try it. You others stay outside in the shade, and we will call you if there is any thing worth seeing inside. Are you coming, Bell?”

Miss Hamlyn acquiescing, the two girls crawled in

one after the other, lying down flat on the sand and pushing themselves through the narrow opening with their hands.

"Why, there is nothing at all in here," said Kate in a disappointed voice, as they rose to their feet and lit their candles in the first transversal corridor, "nothing but two black marble busts,—the owners of the tomb I suppose?—and those broken sarcophagi in the corner. What a shame, after all our trouble! and—oh, Bell, look out! There are horrible white lizards here with shiny eyes like beads and transparent bodies. See! there goes another one. Come on, let's get out of this!"

Miss Hamlyn would come presently. She was standing before one of the two basalt heads—the portrait of a woman. She wiped away the dust from it with her handkerchief, and then held her candle lower down to see it more perfectly. It was a beautiful face, broad-browed, sad-eyed, the full lips parting in a melancholy smile; a face that made a curious impression on the girl, for as she looked at it a strange bewildered feeling of recognition filled her mind. She seemed to have known and loved that woman in some primordial time; a dim perplexing consciousness of some former state of existence held her breathless, spell-bound before the head. The longer she looked, the stronger and more baffling grew the feeling; the sweeter and more haunting grew the face; the more familiar seemed the pleading mournful sweetness of its mouth. It was as though the fair dead woman were appealing and protesting against the irrevocable forgetfulness of Time.

"Are you not coming, Miss Hamlyn? You really ought not to stay so long in this close air," said Arthur from the narrow doorway.

"Look!" answered Bell, pointing to the figure before her without turning around.

He came and stood by her side a moment in silence. By some subtle bond of sympathy between their natures

those two always seemed to understand and enter naturally into each other's strangest moods.

"Do you know, I half believe she is grateful to us for looking at her?" said Miss Hamlyn softly, passing her hand gently over the face to remove the last trace of dust. "Fancy having been forgotten, shut away in the dark in this terrible place, and then being cared for again after three thousand years. I'm sure I knew that woman once — ages and ages ago!"

"Who knows? 'This life is but a sleep and a forgetting.' Suppose our spirits, our souls, or what you will, have lived before in other forms, and that one should suddenly come upon some relic of one's former self among these ancient dead? Can't you imagine the curious feeling of it all? — the haunting recollection which one never could fully grasp, like something floating in a dream."

"I should like to kiss that woman good-by before we go, and yet I don't dare do it," answered Bell. "Shall I? Do you believe her spirit would feel it after all this time?"

"Don't do it, Bell. How can you tell what curious magnetism is still potent here? It is dangerous to tempt a thing of that kind in the old domain of sorcery. Who knows, there may be some power still living among these old Egyptian dead?"

As he spoke something stirred and brushed quickly by them in the darkness. A sudden rush of wind had blown their candle out —

"And as for you, you look like two dusty, dazzled ghosts!" said Gerty gayly as they came into the open air again. "What have you been looking at in there all this time? Did you see any spectres? Were there any bats? Tom says the tombs are full of them."

"I don't know what there is in there," said Livingston —

An hour later they were all sitting on the ground eating lunch in the shadow of the Memnonium.

"There! I begin to feel more like a human being

again, and something less like a dusty mummy," said Campbell, stretching himself luxuriously out as he leisurely prepared to light his cigar. "Hand me that glass of claret, Katie. Thanks! Now this is what I call happiness!"

"And how long do you expect to stay here, then, Livingston?" asked Captain Blake. "What will you find to do with yourself?"

"I don't know, I'm sure; excavate perhaps. Meredith will need at least a month to finish the work he has laid out for himself here. You will find us still at Thebes when you pass it on your way down."

"Yes, but we are going up with you as far as Assuan first," said Mrs. Meredith. "Do you know, I am rather beginning to envy you your month in Nubia, Bell? I am half sorry we decided not to pass the First Cataract."

"We shall all miss you awfully, I'm sure," said Gerty, looking at Livingston as she spoke to Margaret.

"I say, Livingston, you're up in all these things, what is the name of that old beggar over there?" asked Blake, flinging a stone at the prostrate figure of a Colossus half hidden in the sand.

"Amunothph the Third, son of that Queen Mautmes whose story I was tracing out on the walls of Luxor the other day. You know the story, don't you?" he added, lowering his voice; "it is the one Mr. Campbell objected to so strongly because of what he called its 'outrageous resemblance' to the story of the Immaculate Conception. And there *is* a curious likeness between the two. In the Egyptian legend Queen Mautmes receives a messenger from Heaven, the god Thoth, who foretells the birth of this king, and on the hieroglyphs you see Kneph, the Spirit, holding her by the hand while Athor puts through her mouth life for the child. Another version of the Indian legend, probably."

The afternoon was growing late; long shadows fell across the plain, and a softening vapor shrouded the barren hill-sides as they rode home, passing once more

the lonely figures of the Pair. A warm wind was blowing across the blossomy fields, and the air was faint with the honey smell of the white bean flower. Behind the head of Memnon the last yellow light of the day shone like a golden aureole, but a deep shadow rested already on the shattered majesty of that face—looking with calm expectant eyes away to the East, waiting for a new dawn to break, waiting for a new day to rise and touch with light the songless lips of the silent Son of the Morning.

They rowed quietly home through a lovely twilight; over a river of mother-of-pearl and under a sky of faintest rose and gray.

“Have you forgotten all about your letter?” asked Arthur, as Miss Hamlyn clambered up the side of the *Princess*.

She took it from him with an impatient sigh.

“Thank you. I had quite forgotten it,” she said.

The moon was only three or four days old, a mere line of light in the deep blue darkness of the sky. Miss Hamlyn watched it for a long time that night from her cabin window, looking up at the still bright stars or across the water to the shadow hills of the western shore. The dark oily-looking river rolled noiselessly past; the only sound was the far-off rhythm of some native song. Now and then the voices rose and seemed to come nearer, and then died away again, and she heard the regular throb of a drum sounding like the heart beat of the night. In her hand she held George’s letter. Its seal was still unbroken.

“I cannot possibly answer it before we reach Assuan; why not keep it and read it when I am more in the mood?” she thought, as she looked for the key of her desk and laid it away, still unopened, with the others.

CHAPTER VII.

BY MOONLIGHT.

"I've a friend, over the sea ;
I like him, but he loves me."
R. BROWNING.

"**B**Y the way, Bell," said Mrs. Hamlyn, looking up suddenly from her work, "Mr. Livingston is coming here to dine this evening ; I don't know if your father told you he had invited him ?"

"Papa never thinks it worth while to tell me any thing until just the moment before it happens," answered Bell, getting up from her chair and throwing down the book she had been pretending to read.

"I hope you don't mind his coming."

"Whose coming do you mean ? Mr. Livingston's ? No ; of course I don't object to it, — why should I ?"

"Well, I don't know," answered Mrs. Hamlyn doubtfully ; "you two seemed to be very good friends until Gerty came ; but since then, — and particularly since we left Thebes — "

"Since then Mr. Livingston has exhibited the usual logic of his sex by devoting himself to Gerty, after carefully explaining to me that he never talked to young ladies. Do you know, Flossy, sometimes I think Gerty is half in love with Mr. Livingston ? It's next to impossible to guess at what Gerty ever really thinks of people, and indeed she always likes everybody she is with ; but still, somehow, this does not look like a mere flirtation on her part."

"How nice it would be if Gerty married an American," said Mrs. Hamlyn with animation. "I wonder if she would like living in New York. Would it not

be charming, Bell, if they settled down somewhere near us?"

"Oh, charming of course," with very moderate enthusiasm. "What time is it, Flo? Four o'clock? And we shall have dinner at seven as usual I suppose?"

"Yes, of course."

"It is of no use going down to dress yet in that case." She walked restlessly two or three times the length of the deck, and then came back, sat down on the arm of a chair, and laid her face down on the cushion.

"How eternally busy you always are, Flossy! Stitch, stitch, stitch! one would think the fate of nations depended on your finishing that slipper before dark. And you look so aggravatingly quiet and contented over it all: I do wish you would stop drawing that needle in and out and smiling to yourself. You make me nervous."

"Why don't you get a book or a work, Bell, and do something yourself?"

"What's the use? Nothing I ever do amounts to any thing," said the girl in a dispirited way, "I hate work, and I'm tired to death of reading, and I wish—" She laid her face down on the pillow again and finished her sentence to herself.

"I am afraid that you are getting rather bored by this quiet life of ours, dear," said Mrs. Hamlyn placidly. "How does Gerty manage to fill her time up, I wonder? Can't you find occupation as she does?"

"Gerty? oh, Gerty has enough to do, I can assure you. She has to sing to Mr. Livingston, and play to Mr. Meredith, and flirt with Captain Blake,—the only wonder is she finds time enough to do it all. Gerty's all right; it is only I who am bored to death, and cross in consequence—cross even to you sometimes, I'm afraid, you dear, good, patient Flossy," said Bell, starting up again. She went over to the farther end of the deck and began throwing corn to the turkeys and chickens that filled the coops in the empty uncarpeted space near the rudder.

"You poor little greedy things, I wonder how you like being caged up there," she said, pouring a handful of grain in a patterning shower upon their heads. "I think I should like to be a chicken, Flo; with plenty of corn to eat, with no remembrance of any thing better in the past, or any dread of something worse in the future. What an endless afternoon this is," she added, getting up from her knees and walking back to where Mrs. Hamlyn was sitting. "What time do you suppose it can be now?"

"About ten minutes later than when you asked me last."

"Did you ever get into a mood, Flossy, in which your whole mind seemed preoccupied with the expectation—the presentiment rather—of something that was going to happen to you; something so indefinite, one does not know exactly what it is; something that may happen at any moment and yet seems a long way off, so that it is at once near enough to take away from you all power of fixing your attention on any thing whatever, and far enough off, and vague enough in itself to make you long to annihilate all the endless, endless time that stretches between you and it? By the way, don't that sound rather like incipient insanity now that I put it in words?" she added laughing; "I wonder if this fever of restlessness that possesses me can be a symptom of approaching madness? That's a cheerful little problem for you to meditate upon while I go over and get Gerty for a walk, now that the men have stopped tracking."

"You won't have to go far, for there they all are coming along the bank now," said Mrs. Hamlyn.

"We are on our way to market to see the dragomen buy eggs, Miss Hamlyn; won't you come along and give them the benefit of your advice as well?" cried Livingston from the shore.

"There is a village or something of the kind behind that palm-grove off there," explained Gerty, as Bell joined their party, "and I suggested that, as the three

boats happen to have stopped so near together, we might as well improve the occasion by making an exploring expedition into the interior. Where we are going is a Coptic village I believe."

"If the Copts really are what they claim to be, the descendants and the nearest existing approach to the early Christians, what a surly disagreeable set of men those same early Christians must have been;" remarked Tom Campbell. "They are such ugly beggars, and have so carefully ruined so many beautiful things all over Egypt, that one hardly finds it difficult to take the Roman side of the question, and approve in a mild way of the efforts to exterminate them."

"Every thing depends on looking at those things from the proper point of view," said Livingston; "I had a revelation of that truth one day when I had climbed to the highest row of seats near the top of the Roman Colosseum. Looking down, I suddenly discovered that I had got at the proper distance and exactly in the right focus for enjoying a gladiatorial show. The empty oval arena in the centre seemed absolutely to demand something of the kind, and no milder exhibition would have had power enough to give me a sensation at that distance. Since then I have always believed that compassion for bodily suffering was an exceedingly short-sighted emotion; at a distance where the worst details become vague, I think one would feel towards a gladiator as one feels towards the people who get swallowed up in earthquakes at Lima, or eaten by the savages in Central Africa,— a sort of feeling that as long as they were in such an out-of-the-way situation they could hardly be human beings like ourselves."

"There are some more of those dreadful Copts," said Mrs. Meredith, as a party of black turbaned men with sullen faces passed them without looking around, "I am so afraid of them. Did I ever tell you about our visiting that settlement of theirs outside the gates of Cairo, Bell? We drove there one lovely day, a blue

day, that seemed to have wandered down from the heart of some sunny June. The desert sand looked like a great sea of gold up to the very doorway of their fort — it was a sort of fort, though it looked more like a prison — a square of houses walled in by high black walls, with only one small opening in them, at which you had to stoop to enter. The streets were like tunnels, cold and damp ; so narrow, you touched the wall on either side, and so dark you could almost believe they had shut the night in there, and did not know there was such a thing as sunlight in the world."

"Is not that the place where they show you a hole in the ground in which the Virgin took refuge on her flight into Egypt?" asked Kate Horton.

"Yes ; that's in the church. It was full of the water of the overflow when we saw it ; not a pleasant place to sleep in, one would think. That church was where I got so awfully frightened. It was a horrible place, dark and damp like a tomb. Fred was busy making the priest read Coptic to him, — my own belief is, he did nothing of the kind, for they don't even pretend to know what half the words mean in the old MS. they show you, — but Fred was listening to it in the wisest way, trying to look as though he habitually conversed in Coptic when he was at home. Mr. Livingston had gone off somewhere to see some antiquities, and I was all alone, when a lot of these dreadful men came into the church and began looking at me, and scowling and whispering to each other, and all at once I realized how helpless we were there, shut up in that gloomy church, in the very heart of their city, and with only the desert stretching away outside the walls. I got into the most terrible panic you can imagine ; it was like something in a bad dream, when you want to escape from some danger and suddenly find that you cannot move hand or foot. I was just going to rush over to Fred and have at least the melancholy satisfaction of being murdered in his presence, when I happened to look up, and there, high up on the wall near the roof, I saw one long slender shaft of light, a

sunbeam that seemed to have trickled in like a drop of liquid gold from the beautiful day outside. I knew it was all right then."

"Now is not that like a woman?" asked Tom; "no one could come to grief because — the sun shone through a hole in the wall! Are murders invariably preceded by eclipses in America, Mrs. Meredith? You must find it rather disturbing to your solar system, I should think. I don't want to be rude, but I must proclaim my delight in that kind of logic, it is so delightfully feminine, it soothes one's masculine vanity in such a pleasing way."

"I never knew a man yet who, in the bottom of his soul, did not cherish the idea that the mere fact of his being a man was a proof of his own cleverness," remarked Gerty. "I wish one did not have to meet so many men who have limited their cleverness to that."

"I met a very talented and superior woman once," said Meredith, "who seriously assured me she preferred talking to the dullest man of her acquaintance rather than the most interesting woman; giving as her reason the fact that she did not care so much for people on account of what they offered her, as for what they induced her to say and think."

"That carries out my theory that 'tyrant man' is the work as well as the *bête noire* of women — for a tyrant is always the result of a lack of independence and courage in his surroundings. I'm rather inclined to look at them all as the victims of circumstance, from Nero downwards; for after a certain point acquiescence and submission are the hardest temptation that can be offered poor human nature, I believe."

"It is one to which few of my friends are ever exposed by me," said Bell, laughing.

"What is commoner than to hear women — girls especially, for they are still in the rebellious stage of existence — wish that they had been men, and who ever heard a man wishing he were women?" asked Blake.

"Oh, of course not, you are all far too logical and sensible, and all that sort of thing, ever to wish for any thing impossible," said Gerty quickly; "as for possible things — if I were a man I never should wish for any thing possible, I should get it."

"How, Miss Campbell? I should like to be told. There are lots of things I wish for without getting."

"How? oh — anyhow — so I got it!"

"Well, for calm thoroughgoing unscrupulousness, recommend me to lovely woman," remarked Tom.

~~"I don't think your kind of wishing is exactly what Gerty means, Mr. Livingston,"~~ said Bell; "I don't believe men ever wish for things in the same way we do. Half a woman's life is spent in wanting something she cannot or will not get. I wonder if you can imagine what it is to want any thing with such a longing, your whole life seems to be but the desire for it — women are not apt to have more than one interest at a time you know — and yet to go on living without ever raising your hand to take it, without even looking as though you cared to have it until it is offered to you, — and offered in a certain way? I don't believe there is a man living with that amount of self-control, and hardly a woman without it."

"Now, Miss Hamlyn, you *have* committed yourself," said Livingston, laughing. The path by the bank had narrowed as it reached the cultivated fields, and these two had fallen behind the others and were walking together alone — "if you should even attempt to deny that that last speech of yours was founded on personal experience, I should consider you a living proof of the awful duplicity of your sex."

Bell laughed evasively.

"That is one of the disadvantages of too much fervor," she answered lightly; "it always deludes one's hearers into a belief in one's experience rather than in one's powers of imagination. I seriously think of adopting your favorite motto in future — *point de zèle*. You will call that a new instance of our duplicity, I suppose?"

Livingston looked at her for a moment rather curiously. "A thoroughly, consistently sincere woman may be a rarity," he said slowly, "but—there are exceptions. I thought I had discovered one some time ago: —a girl who seemed to me frank to a fault; to be depended on for perfect honesty in word and look and deed under every possible combination of circumstance. Later—" He hesitated.

"You found your exception a mere mortal like the rest of us?"

"I do not know that yet," he answered slowly; "appearances seem to be against her, I confess; but still—I'm holding my judgment in suspense for the present, Miss Hamlyn."

"If I had a friend whose sincerity I doubted, I should go to her and tell her of it directly," answered Bell.

"But if that were impossible? if it were for any act you had no right to question that the doubt had come?"

"Then I would show that my friendship was something more than a mere name by having faith in her. I would believe I had mistaken any thing before I doubted my friend."

"You are quite sure of what you say, Miss Hamlyn? Quite sure that you advise me to have perfect faith in —my friend?"

"I am perfectly sure of it," said Bell proudly, looking him full in the face.

"Thanks! I shall do as you tell me. After this I mean to believe I am mistaken in every thing rather than think my friend is not all I took her to be."

They walked on a few moments in silence, and then he turned to her and said suddenly,—

"Bell—I beg your pardon, Miss Hamlyn, you have my sister's name, and I forget myself sometimes when I speak to you—"

"I like to have you call me Bell."

"And I like to call you so. If I ask you a question,

Bell, I wonder if you would answer it without asking me how I happen to know any thing about the subject?"

"I will tell you any thing about myself you could possibly care to know."

"You will really!" he said, stopping short and looking at her; "tell me this then — perhaps I ought not to ask you — but *is* it true that you —"

"Now, Miss Hamlyn, this is a capital occasion for you to give me one of those lessons in Arabic we were talking about the other day. I want to ask that market-woman over there what she would sell me her necklace for. What am I to say? Oh, but it is of no use telling me here, you must come with me and hear me say it. You remember I warned you beforehand I should require a great deal of teaching."

"I'll come directly, Captain Blake. Is what true, Mr. Livingston?" turning eagerly to him and lowering her voice.

"I was merely going to ask you a foolish question," said Arthur carelessly; "a question that has already answered itself."

That night the twilight closed in still and gray; there was scarcely wind enough to fill the sail, and the *Princess* was drifting but slowly through the water when Livingston came on board.

At a bend in the river just in front of the boat a narrow sand-spit thrust its bare brown length across their track. A flock of pelicans had settled down upon it for the night, standing there motionless, the last glow of color in the west turning their silvery feathers to faintest rose; behind them glowed the red granite of the Arabian hills; and the river rolled blue and chilly at their feet. As the dahabeah neared them the dragon-man fired once or twice, and the whole multitude rose heavily with a flutter and whirr — their dusky wings dark against the cold gray of the sky — a last gleam of gold striking their shining breasts. They flew straight across the sunset; first in a confused mass, and then in a thin wavering line that grew fainter and thinner

until it melted quite away and was lost among the shadows.

"How lovely that was," said Bell, as the last flutter of wings passed by; "I like pelicans, they are such curious creatures, with their huge webbed feet; their thick humpbacked bodies; their snakelike necks; and those long rosy and green and yellow bills of theirs, that have the color of some tropical fruit."

"Do you remember the pelicans in the hotel garden at Cairo?" asked Arthur; "one of them was an especial friend of mine. I always carried him a bit of bread after luncheon, and he never failed to make a furious onslaught on me in return. It was great fun to see him after dinner, meditating, standing on one foot and watching one quietly out of the corner of his pink eyes. There was a hoary depravity, a look of fabulous old age about him, as though he had come to us out of the dead and gone centuries, and knew and remembered half the secrets of the past. I should not like to say any thing I did not want overheard before that old pelican at Shepheard's."

There was no afterglow that night, only a long yellow line across the west, against which a solitary camel and his driver stood, dark and definite, as they slowly paced along the winding river bank.

The evening light was sad and gray and wan, an evening full of melancholy and regret; but as the night grew later, clear bright stars began shining out against the sombre sky. When Bell came up on deck after dinner a long track of moonlight shifted and glittered with the rushing tide. They were sailing fast before a good breeze, the two other dahabeahs close behind them, their great swaying sails telling as black against the sky, and the stars looking like fireflies entangled in their rigging.

Miss Hamlyn was leaning over the side of the boat. An undefined and nameless sadness seemed to have fallen about her like a cloud. She felt perplexed and discouraged, full of unsatisfied desire. She stood there

quietly for some little time, looking wearily out across the river to where the mountains loomed up dimly, like phantoms through the mist. A slight noise made her turn suddenly round. She looked up; Livingston was standing by her side.

"I wish you would tell me something?" he said, coming closer and yielding to a sudden impulse. "Something is troubling you. What is it? What is the matter, Bell?"

"With me? oh — nothing."

"Nothing? with your lips quivering, and your eyes so full of tears you cannot even raise them to look at me?"

"You are a close observer, Mr. Livingston."

"Pardon me. I never intended to force your confidence; it is hardly fair to answer me in that tone," said Arthur, drawing back.

They were both silent for a moment, and then Bell turned quickly towards him, her mouth trembling, the color coming and going on her cheek.

"Forgive me," she said in a hurried uncertain voice; "it is very good of you to care. I am rather unhappy sometimes, but — I don't think I can talk about it, not even to you."

She held out her hand to him as she spoke, and he took it and clasped it a moment in both of his.

"You poor child," he said gently, "what is it troubles you? will you not tell me? I would try and help you if I only knew how."

"Thanks! you are very good. You could do nothing. It is a trouble I have brought upon myself and one that I must bear alone. No one can help me in any way."

"Is it something that has gone wrong? or has anybody vexed you? I —"

"Don't ask me any questions, Mr. Livingston; please don't — I cannot bear it!" she cried, turning away from him and laying her face down upon her folded arms. And there was something childlike in the very abandonment of her attitude which moved the man beside her to

a tender, half-protecting pity. For a moment he stood hesitating ; the moonlight shifted with the swaying shadow of the sail ; the water rushed and whispered as it passed ; the night was full of its low sweet murmurings — unheeded voices hastening to the sea.

“ Bell,” said Arthur, very gently, “ some of the things you have told me, and a great many more that I have seen or heard for myself, have made me think — forgive me if I am mistaken — that there is not that confidence between you and your father which would make it easy for you to tell him every thing about yourself. As for Mrs. Hamlyn, she is very kind to you I know, but you are much more capable of caring for her than she is of helping you. Am I right so far.?”

“ Yes, you are quite right. I have not a friend in the world, Mr. Livingston, except — well, like Gerty for instance,” she said, breaking off with a short laugh.

“ Miss Hamlyn, I’m a great deal older than you are. I’ve seen the folly and learned the results of half the things that make or mar one’s life. I wish you would believe that I might help you now. See,” he said, laying his hand lightly on her arm to make her look up, “ I cannot do much for you at the best, I am afraid ; but will you just give me a chance to try? If you stand in need of a friend, will you see what my friendship is worth?”

She looked at him a moment steadily : “ How good you are to me! ” she said at last with a sigh.

But it was a very fragmentary story which she told him that night. A story so full of reservations, of half-confidences, of faint allusions almost too intangible for understanding, that it was a question if Livingston were much the wiser at its close. But this, I need hardly say, was a reflection which occurred to him much later. At the moment — commented upon and defined by the magic of two shining eyes, listened to by the light of that waning moon — its ambiguity seemed rather a part of the general glamour ; something akin to the vague and subtle suggestion of the night. It was in fact a sort of

general confession, and, like all confessions, it was open to inferences of the most conflicting nature. On one point alone Miss Hamlyn was scrupulously reticent. She did not mention George Ferris by name. "And believing you to be indeed my friend, Mr. Livingston, I will ask you to show me your friendship by never speaking of this to me again," she concluded.

"I will do any thing and every thing you ask me to," he answered promptly; "but why must you put it out of my power to help you even by my advice?"

"Because I ought not to have told you this about—I think you understand who it is I have been speaking to you about?"

"Yes. I think I understand."

"I ought not to have told it to you. It was not fair to—him. I don't know why I did it; perhaps it was because you are so kind to me, kinder than any one I know. It is easy for me to tell you any thing—almost too easy, I am afraid." She was silent for a moment. When she next spoke it was in an altered voice and with a marked change of manner. "Will you think me very inhospitable if I tell you it is very late for me to stay up here? I am afraid papa will not like it; he is easily vexed by a trifle like that, at times."

Livingston started.

"You are quite right, and I am very remiss in my capacity as a chaperon," he said, taking out his watch. "Eleven o'clock! Good Heavens, this is terrible! It is over three quarters of an hour since I told Mrs. Hamlyn I would step up on deck and say good-night to you before I let the men put me on board the *Ibis*. What on earth will she think of my fashion of saying good-night?"

"Oh, that is no matter. I will tell her I kept you talking. It is never difficult to explain things to Flossy," answered Bell, holding out her hand,—"good-night."

"Good-night."

"I hope you were not too much astonished by my frankness. I don't think you ever can accuse me of

'duplicity' again, but — I wish — I wish before you go you would say you do not think the less of me for what I have told you ? " she said wistfully.

His grasp tightened, he bent down a little and looked her full in the face.

"Do you need to be told that, Bell ? "

"And I'll be shot, Meredith," said Livingston abruptly, half an hour later, pausing in his restless pacing of the deck, "I'll be shot if I can see what any girl can find to fall in love with in that fellow Blake ? "

"Blake thinks he sees that every time he looks in his glass," said Fred, getting up from the divan and stretching his arms out with a smothered yawn. "What's the matter now, Arthur ? Who has been succumbing lately to the gallant captain's charms ? Not the fair and fascinating Gertrude, surely ? "

Mr. Livingston was merely indulging in general and philosophic speculations, he answered quickly. "How many times must I tell you, Meredith, that personalities are the surest sign of a small mind ? Have another pipe before you turn in, do, there's a good fellow. What sense is there in going to bed while such a moon is shining ? As for me, I feel as though I could not get to sleep for a week."

"Dining out disagrees with you, Arthur. You had better stick to the old *Ibis* after this. How many times must I repeat that sitting up to look at the moon is the surest sign of an enfeebled intelligence ? And so good-night, old fellow," said Meredith.

CHAPTER VIII.

LED INTO TEMPTATION.

“ . . . Songs that tell in artful phrase
The secrets of our lives, and plead and pray
For alms of memory with the aftertime.”

SOME one was playing on the Merediths' piano, striking deep crashing chords that thrilled and quivered away into silence, or touching the keys absently into little trills and gushes of melody which mingled with, and lost themselves amidst the sound of voices. The night wind came blowing in at the open door ; now and then the heavy curtain lifted back, and a stream of white radiance poured in, mingling with the great patch of moonlight on the floor.

“ And this is our last evening together,” said Arthur half aloud to some one sitting near him.

“ Yes.” The word sounded like a sigh. “ Play something else, Mrs. Meredith,” said Bell, rising and going over to the piano. From where he sat Arthur could see the straight young figure standing tall and slim, her white dress vaguely showing through the darkness. Behind her was an open window ; above her head a strip of starlit sky.

Margaret's hands slipped lightly over the keys. She began playing one of those nameless little thoughts of Schumann's : a slow, tender movement, full of sharp modulations, of short sweet silences, that suggested the bright trembling gleams of sunlight — the quick patterning rain — of a shining, showery day. A few scattered notes — a hesitating, uncertain chord — the music swelled and rose, growing stronger, louder, more imperative ; fading away — the deep strong chords breaking

and melting, the melody rising and falling like some dear beseeching voice from out the past. Rising—faltering—

“That is Beethoven’s ‘Desire,’ ” said Gerty softly.

In Bell’s heart the pleading voice seemed echoing on and on. She went silently back to her old place in the shadow and sat down again. Somebody leaned a little forward and took Bell’s hand in his. She did not draw it away. The warm close clasp was something tangible at last; something real to still the vague disquiet of her soul.

Some one had come knocking at Bell’s cabin door early that afternoon.

“It is I—I—Gerty. Let me in, Bell,” a voice had cried, while a hand was rattling impatiently at the lock. “How are you? and what are you doing in here?” taking in every thing at a glance—the look of the room, Bell’s face, some scattered papers, the leather desk standing half open on the window sill.

Bell threw in the letters hastily and closed down the lid with a snap.

“I am glad to see you, dear; come in. It is a long while since you have been here, Gerty,” she said, speaking quickly and with some confusion; “sit down, or—wait, come into the saloon. You will find it more comfortable than this little den of mine.”

“Not a bit of it. Places are always comfortable enough; it is only people who are uncomfortable at times,” said Gerty, sitting down on the edge of the bed. “Never mind that box; it is not in my way at all. I came to tell you about a plan of mine, Bell,—a plan that will depend upon you for its success.” She hesitated a moment how to go on. “We shall be at Assuan to-morrow, Abdallah says, and then the Merediths will leave us,” she began abruptly.

“Yes, I know it. And what then?” said Bell after a pause, lifting her sweet grave glance to Gerty’s puzzled face. “What is it, dear? You know I will help you in any thing you like.”

"Look here, Bell; don't you think it would be uncommonly nice if Mr. Livingston were to go up into Nubia with us? Would you not like it? I know I should."

"Like it? — but what is the use of talking about it? Mr. Livingston is going back with the Merediths to Thebes. He told me so yesterday."

"And did you never hear of any one changing his mind? Unluckily, thanks to Captain Blake's having come, we have not a spare inch of room on board our boat; but what would be easier than for your father to invite him on the *Princess*? You have an empty state-room to begin with, and you are only three altogether. Mr. Livingston could go up with you as well as not, and join the Merediths again at Thebes on the way down. I am sure they will not miss him while Mr. Meredith is digging away at those old ruins, and we — well, candidly now — I, for one, would be very glad if Mr. Livingston would come along."

"But how — how do you know that Mr. Livingston would care to come?"

"Oh, never mind that," said Gerty, slipping her feet down to the floor, and crossing over to the toilet table. "You get Mr. Hamlyn to invite him, and — Where do you keep your hair-pins, Bell? Have you not got any longer ones than that? Do you know, I like your room better than my own; it looks larger. But where do you put your dresses?"

"In that locker there. But — about Mr. Livingston, Gerty —"

Miss Campbell took up the hand-glass and looked deliberately at herself before answering.

"*Les yeux gris vont au paradis.* I believe that is the only word of French that Captain Blake has ever been able to remember half an hour," she said vaguely. "Mr. Livingston? oh, yes — once get your father to invite him, I tell you, and there won't be any trouble about his coming. I can answer for that much, any way."

"Can you really? Do you mean—" Bell checked herself quickly. "Very well, I will do what I can for you, Gerty. I, at least, have not changed, although you have become so different with me from what you were. You never tell me any thing about yourself nowadays."

"Don't I? Perhaps I may some time; who knows?" she answered smiling complacently back at the pretty reflection in the glass and smoothing down her ruffled ribbons. "There! I am all right now I think? Those tiresome frills will never stay in place. Well! I'm going now. *Au revoir, dear.*" She went up to Bell and kissed her with careless affection as she spoke; Gerty was always affectionate, even caressing, in her manner when not preoccupied with something else. "Mind you don't forget to speak to Mr. Hamlyn at once. What is in that box, Bell? Old letters? What are you doing with them, then? You will be at the Merediths' to-night, of course? Well, good-by until I see you again."

There are moods of feeling, transition stages, long pauses in the story of our lives, that remind one of the hour which ends a summer day. The air is warm, and soft, and still. A great peacefulness fills the sky — making the twilight hour seem longer than all the hot and busy day; the pale lights come and go; the shadows darken by the river bank; a star glitters through the branches overhead — we awake with a start from a dream of tender reflections, of faint sweet color, of fainter sweeter sounds — already the night has fallen, and behold! the world about us is as another world. With every instant we are drifting farther away from what has been, drifting deeper into the shadow, nearer the dawning of another day.

As Bell sat there by her window turning over with half reluctant touch the letters she had read so often in the bygone days, the last rose-glow of sunset, the last remembered sweetness in the past was fading

from her life. After this day, the thought of what had been would have the power of wounding her, of filling her soul with sharp remorse ; with passionate self-reproach ; with endless, idle regret ; but never again, never in all the time to come with any thought of joy. But it was not in Miss Hamlyn's nature to yield up lightly what once she had possessed. Instinctively she strove to be faithful to her old self, to watch jealously over every thought that seemed to wrong the memory of the past. As yet she had never doubted for a moment that when the summons came she would be ready for the sacrifice ; as yet she had full faith in her own strength. Bell was very young in those days, young and credulous, and proudly sure that, in intention at least, hers was a loyal and a constant heart. Later, she had to learn that life, and time, and all the endless net of circumstance, are stronger than intention, are more enduring than pride, are more irresistible than either hope or love.

Presently her restless fingers drew from the packet a letter with a still unbroken seal. "I—I do believe I have forgotten to read it!" she said, half aloud, the color rushing to her cheeks with a sudden sense of shame at her own neglect.

"*Miss Hamlyn, Post Restante, Thebes, Egypt.*" The clear black and white address seemed staring her reproachfully in the face whichever way she turned.

She tore the envelope open with a quick resolve to know—the best—the worst ; to realize by seeing it written to what exacting affection she had bound herself.

"*My darling Bell, why do you write so seldom to me now?*" the letter began. Bell turned to the signature—"Yours, always and only yours." The words filled her with a sudden weariness and distaste. She read them again—once—twice ; the paper fell from her hand. "I cannot, no I cannot read it now," she thought, starting suddenly to her feet. "To-morrow we shall be at Assuan. To-morrow it will be all over.

Every thing will be different, and then when — when they are gone, I will write to George."

She put the letter resolutely away without even looking at it again. "To-morrow every thing will be different," she repeated to herself, locking up her desk. "I must tell Gerty that I cannot ask papa to do it. If Mr. Livingston were to come with us to Nubia —" Her face softened and brightened for a moment at the mere thought, a new light shone in the sweet blue eyes, a half smile trembled on her mouth. "I dare not risk it. I know too well what would be the result of it all," she said, closing her lips together firmly, "I — oh George, poor George, dear George, help me to be true to you! I am trying to keep my word, indeed, indeed, I am; but oh, George, help me to be true to you," she cried with sudden longing, with sudden sharp despair. And even as she spoke, even as she called his name, in her inmost heart she knew it was too late. Already she was drifting fast towards a tumultuous sea of passion, the beating of whose troubled waves she seemed to hear already in her dreams.

Something of the same feeling came to her again as she sat in the dark listening to Margaret's playing.

Some dim perception of what a daily intercourse with Arthur would expose her to — some lingering sense of faithfulness to one who was not present to enforce his claim — had sufficed to make her hesitate before; but now, as the plaintive music soothed and stirred her troubled spirit, a great compassion for Ferris overwhelmed and swept away all thought of self. All the tenderness, all the latent sentiment of Bell's nature quivered in response to that gentle penetrating voice.

She moved a little aside, drawing her hand gently away from Livingston's touch. His grasp tightened, and, suddenly, all power of resistance, all thought of effort seemed to fade and die away.

"It is for the last time," she thought; "and oh, I

would have cared for him so dearly if I might—" and she let her hand rest passively in his.

"What do you say to a moonlight walk on the bank, Miss Hamlyn?" suggested Blake, as they all went out together into the still radiance of the night.

"Miss Hamlyn cannot possibly go with you this evening, Blake; she is coming for a last turn with me," said Arthur quietly.

"Suppose we all go up and have a look at the temple. Come, Miss Horton, I know that you want to be able to say you saw Kom Ombos by moonlight," said Meredith.

The temple of Kom Ombos stands on an elevated plateau which overhangs the Nile. Among Bell's memories of Egypt there is a vivid picture of the way the ruin looked that night, the moonlight lying whitely on sand and stone, casting the sharp strong shadow of the gateway to the very water's edge. One small fleecy cloud, a spot of light against the deep violet of the sky, was floating high above their heads. The light wind drove it fast across the moon, that tipped its foamy whiteness with a silver line.

"What has made you so silent all the evening, Bell?" asked Livingston, as one by one the others rose from their seats among the shattered shafts and fallen blocks of stone, and started homeward down the hill again. "Sit still a moment, we can easily overtake the others when we like. It is my turn to talk to you now. Tell me first—Please do sit down again! Surely you are not going to refuse me five minutes of yourself the last night we are together for Heaven knows how long! Ah, that is better. Thanks! What was I saying,—for you made me quite forget it? Oh, yes—what have you been thinking about all this while?"

"Many things. That this was our last evening together, for one. Wondering what will happen before we see each other again."

"Shall we ever see each other again?"

"Indeed I hope so, Mr. Livingston. Why should you ask that? Are not the Merediths to be at Thebes when we return? Surely you would have told me if you did not mean —"

"We shall be at Thebes fast enough. What I meant to ask you was rather — not Shall we meet? but, When we do meet shall we be the same? Is it the Miss Hamlyn of a month ago, the Bell of to-day, or some third stranger, some new changed version of my friend who will meet me on your return from Nubia? What are you really like, Bell? Tell me? I know so much and yet so little of your hidden self. Are you changeable, child? When you are absent is it your nature to remember or do you quite forget?"

"I shall not forget you," answered Bell.

"It has been a pleasant month together, Bell."

"Very pleasant."

"And you are sorry it is ended now? that we shall not see each other for weeks and weeks, and perhaps not even then? Who knows, if one of the hundred accidents of life may not prevent our meeting at the last."

Miss Hamlyn was silent.

"Are you not sorry, Bell?"

"You know I am. What — what is the good of making me repeat it?"

"I like to hear you say it. I am sorry too."

They were both silent for a moment, then Bell rose slowly. "Shall we go down again? See, the others are almost out of sight," she said in an unsteady voice that *would falter* when she spoke.

"By the way," said Livingston, stooping to pick up her burnous from where it had fallen at her feet, "you have not told me what you thought of my coolness in appropriating you to-night? Did you happen to notice Blake's expression when I informed him that you were coming out with me instead?"

"I am quite sure he knew it was an invention on your part, Mr. Livingston."

"Then you give him more credit for penetration than

I am disposed to do. In some ways he's not a bad sort of a fellow, but on the whole — ” He stopped short and looked at Bell apologetically. “ I beg your pardon. It was very stupid of me to forget. Of course you must know that I never could have meant to say any thing derogatory to Blake before you.”

“ And why not before me especially? You surely cannot suppose that I take any peculiar interest in people's opinions of Captain Blake.”

“ You are very independent.”

“ Why not call it 'very indifferent'? ” she asked, with a sudden recollection of something Gerty had hinted at one day.

Livingston turned sharply round with an astonished stare. “ Upon my word I cannot understand you! ” he said. “ 'Indifferent! ' Then what on earth — Miss Hamlyn, help me, please. I want to find some justification for not keeping an impossible promise made to you some two or three days ago. I want a plausible excuse for breaking the seal of silence you put upon my lips ; in short, I want to ask you something which I have vowed I would not ask. May I speak of it just this once? ”

“ I had rather not, Mr. Livingston. Adopt my own conclusion for to-night and 'let the dead past bury its dead.' Let us talk about something else ; about you, about the moonlight, about Assuan, about any thing in the world excepting only me. I have been thinking about myself to-day until I am fairly weary of the thought ; and why spoil to-night, our very last night together? ”

They had reached the farther edge of the plateau as she spoke, and now stopped for a moment looking back. Behind the temple the low silver-crested hills of the Desert reached to the farthest line of violet sky ; before them, at their feet, a silver river ran swiftly to the sea. Through the warm hush of the night they could catch each ripple of the rushing tide, could hear each footstep brushing through the cool soft surface of the sand.

“ It is curious,” said Livingston suddenly, “ but all

the evening I have been conscious of some faint sweet fragrance that haunts me wherever I go. I felt it floating about me all through the music like some subtle breath of distant summer fields ; and now it comes to me again, and seems to fill the air, as though the moonlight had taken on itself some penetrating odor of its own."

"Is this it?" asked Bell, taking a bunch of white bean flowers from her belt.

"Then it was something real after all. I had begun to think I was bewitched. Let me have them ; or, rather — stop! — tell me who gave them to you, first."

"I picked them myself this morning — they are the only flowers that grow here, you know — and I have worn them all the evening. Will you have them now?" She held out her hand ; the white, spirit-like flowers looking whiter still in the moonlight. Livingston took them from her, and a sudden impulse made him carry them to his lips.

"I — I am afraid they are half faded already," said Bell, turning away.

CHAPTER IX.

ARTHUR.

"**V**IRTUE is its own reward," quoted Gerty Campbell one day, speaking of one thing or another.

"A proof that the supply of virtue is far in excess of the demand for it," remarked Mr. Livingston. "People of conscientious temperament are always making unnecessary sacrifices, volunteering for the honors of martyrdom and then feeling quite outraged that no exception is made in their favor to the general rule which requires a fine long perspective of time before

contemporary virtue becomes visible to the bystander. If ever I make a moral sacrifice — not the most likely thing by the way — I shall do it with a lively realization of the fact that I am sure to regret it within half an hour."

The words came back to Bell that morning with the new force of personal experience. Miss Hamlyn was certainly no heroine at heart. It was rather a crude instinctive sense of fairness than any high idea of duty which had induced her to forego Livingston's presence on their further journey southward, and now, once committed to the decision, she was regretting it with all the unreasonable impatience of a child. It is so difficult to decide that one *ought* to renounce certain things, that, having once done so, being really called upon to give them up seems an additional and gratuitous exaction. A good intention is so apt to count as an accomplished fact in our private reckonings with Fate.

That morning had seemed an endless lapse of time to Bell. She had spent the night tossing to and fro in vague excitement or awaking with a start from some confusing and feverish dream to look out at the still and solemn night, or listen to the low wash of the river against the bank. Once, near morning, longing for space and weary of the small familiar aspect of her room, she went to the window, leaned out, and looked far down the river's course. Here and there a star was reflected on its black and oily-looking surface; the moon had set, but a strange pale radiance lingered still in the sky behind the far line of shadowy hills. The cool damp air of the night blowing against her face seemed gradually to dispel the trouble of her great unrest; a sense of exceeding peace and calm fell upon her as she looked. The wide silence of the river, the large trustfulness of the sleeping earth lying beneath that low protecting arch of sky, seemed to open a new world of thought and feeling to the girl; a great sense of the infinite swept over her troubled spirit, soothing and strengthening her soul. The air had grown chill

and sharp, a quick shiver ruffled the brooding stillness of the water, the sky was turning to the pearly gray of dawn before she threw herself upon the bed again, to merge all recollection in heavy dreamless sleep.

"You look pale this morning, child," said Mr. Hamlyn, putting his hand on Bell's shoulder and turning her face around to the light, as he met her coming down the deck stairs after breakfast. "Is any thing the matter with you? By the way, I have been thinking of inviting young Livingston to go up as far as the Second Cataract with us. How do you like the plan? Would you think it advisable? and would it amuse you to have him come?"

"I do not think you had better ask him, papa."

"Why not?" asked Mr. Hamlyn.

Bell felt her father's penetrating eyes fixed on her face, and turned hastily to escape their keen scrutiny. "I — I believe Flossy wants me down below," she stammered, slipping away from Mr. Hamlyn's grasp.

After that the day had dragged wearily on; one of those blue sunny days that seem so intolerably tedious to eyes out of harmony with their glad brightness. At four o'clock the three dahabeahs expected to reach Assuan, and four o'clock seemed to Bell some far-off point of time that never drew any nearer. By two she had gone down into her own room, ostensibly to dress, but in reality to be alone, to lock her door upon the outside world and enjoy the luxury of thinking without even a pretence of occupation. I say "of thinking," and yet I question if Bell was thinking then. Physically as well as mentally the girl was tired out; only capable of feeling a restless dull impatience at the slow, slow passing of the hours. She looked forward to seeing Livingston for the last time as to the only point of interest in all the dull level of the coming month, and postponed all other considerations with a hasty resolve to think of that afterwards — to-morrow. Desire had not yet lost itself in self-satisfying passion, but Bell's feeling towards Arthur had reached that stage in which

every other thought and emotion was merged in an intense restless longing to be near him, within sound of his voice, within touch of his hand.

The breeze had almost died away ; it was nearly five o'clock before the widening river, the scattered masses of basaltic rock, and the low-lying island of Elephantine marked their approach to the last town on this side of the Cataract.

It was market day in Assuan. A long caravan of loaded camels had just arrived from the farther side of the African desert. The high mudbank was covered with curious figures in fantastic dress ; brawny half-naked Nubians carrying long spears and shields of silver-embossed leather ; stately Arab merchants in long black gowns, with soft waving bunches of ostrich feathers in their hands ; and brisk Maltese traders offering for sale some heavy silver bracelet or native amulet against the evil eye, elbowed each other aside beneath the waving palms. A long row of natives, each with something to sell, squatted along the bank. Piles of brightly stained baskets woven of colored straw, strings of beads, spotted tiger skins or great white ostrich eggs were scattered before them on the sand or held up with wild cries of entreaty whenever a curtain moved or a face appeared on the newly arrived dahabeahs.

Now and then some Turkish trader from the far Sudan strutted by in new and brilliant garments ; a long gun, taller than himself — and, like all Eastern firearms, apparently designed to keep his enemy at a safe distance rather than to wound him — slung across his back ; an arsenal of clumsy pistols and silver-hilted daggers in his crimson belt of silk ; and in his hand a thick *koor-bash*, or native whip of twisted hippopotamus hide, with which he would strike at the nearest native in moments of abstraction. Once or twice a gray-coated, white-hatted foreigner passed along, followed by a servant carrying his portfolio or his gamebag, and escorted by a troop of clamorous backsheesh-begging boys.

Half an hour after their arrival the *Princess* and *Cleo-*

patra were settled for the night. Their great sails were tightly furled, their bows were run into the soft mud of the bank, and planks and handrails bridged the space between the lower deck and shore. Already the fat brown sheep had been taken out of their accustomed home in the long-boat, towed astern, and were picketed before heaps of green lupin-stalks, stolen, I regret to say, from the fields they had passed that afternoon ; for Egyptian sailors invariably steal—it is a part of the profession. To guard against this national trait in others, a man was already stationed to watch the erratic movements of the liberated cocks and hens and turkeys, scratching and pluming themselves in the late afternoon sunshine.

Bell was soon sitting on deck, under the newest awning with the scarlet binding, which gave a festive touch to the appearance of the dahabeah, holding a book in her hand and waiting. A week ago she would have naturally run over to see Gerty and compare notes of the day's impression or adventure, but now she was far too conscious of her wish to go there to allow herself to leave the boat.

"There is a note for you, child," said Mrs. Hamlyn, coming up the steps.

"Dearest Bell," the letter ran, "We are all going over to the island to see the sun set; will call for you in an hour or two if you care to come. Mr. Livingston is waiting to take this to you. In haste. Yours, Gerty.

"P.S. Isn't the news charming?"

"Did Mr. Livingston bring this? Where is he?" asked Bell, starting up.

"In the cabin with Mr. Meredith and your father. But you can't go down, Bell. They are talking business together, and your father particularly desires not to be interrupted."

The island of Elephantine is a small low mass of black rock, strewn with the *débris* of Egyptian temples and Christian mud-huts, half covered by the drifting sand, with here and there a coarse green patch of

rankly growing halfeh-grass and farther on a group of stunted palms. Crossing the river from Assuan was like leaving Egypt for the heart of Africa. The type had changed ; the black-skinned, heavily-built Nubian had suddenly taken the place of the pale and slender Arab ; the dress was different — was entirely missing in fact ; half the children of the island being costumed with a string of beads, a silver amulet in their thick castor-oil-anointed hair, a strip of blue tattoo across their foreheads, and a girdle of leather thongs tied about their waists.

“Cheerful kind of place,” remarked Tom Campbell, springing out of the boat as the sailors dragged it higher up the beach ; “popularly called the Island of Flowers on account of these blooming specimens of our race, I suppose. I am afraid these people are too near the monkey and not near enough the man to be a ‘case in point ; otherwise I should imagine we had discovered Mr. Darwin’s ‘missing link.’”

Miss Hamlyn laughed. Miss Hamlyn seemed disposed to laugh at any thing just then ; she was in the highest of good spirits and doing her best to charm and bewilder Blake, for “No, Mr. Livingston is not coming at all,” Gerty had said carelessly as they left the dahabeah ; “they are so awfully busy, you know, getting the *Ibis* ready to start at once. What ! has no one told you ? why, we all knew it this morning ; Mr. Meredith heard that Monsieur — what’s his name ? that Frenchman who manages all the temples ; don’t you know whom I mean ? — Maffette Bey is to be in Thebes next week for one day, and it appears the scientific world would perish utterly if Mr. Meredith were not there in time to meet him. So they start back as soon as the boat can be put in order. Pity they have to miss Philæ, is it not ? I don’t — Why, Bell, you have broken that pretty fan Mr. Livingston gave you ! You might have known it was not strong enough to open in that fashion.”

“It is not of the slightest consequence,” Miss Ham-

lyn averred. "It was an old thing. I liked it at first, but now—" She tossed it lightly over the side of the boat and watched it go floating away.

"What a shame!" cried Gerty. "Why, I take the greatest care of mine."

"Is that the way you treat old friends, Miss Hamlyn?"

"Sometimes, Captain Blake. Besides, this was really quite an old affair, I had had it a week. A week to break a fan, a month to break a friendship;—how long does it take to break a heart, Gerty dear?" cried the girl, her cheeks flushed, her blue eyes shining.

Pique, quick resentment, wounded vanity, a bitter bitter disappointment were in her heart. Blake thought he had never seen her look so pretty before. The young man was charmed with her vivacity, with the contagious happiness of her ringing laugh. He listened to her with an admiring smile; for the first time she seemed to him more charming even than Gerty.

It was a still gray evening. A thick haze covered the heavy hanging sky. From the highest point of the island, looking away to the south, the Nile was broken and fretted by a thousand jagged fragments of black rock, past which the river struggled and surged—a wide confusion of angry foam and sullen-looking pools.

"A dull evening after all," said Blake, looking round as they gained the summit of the hill.

Miss Hamlyn did not answer; her mood had changed: presently she wandered off to a little distance and sat down alone.

Something in the low continuous roar of the rapids seemed to deaden and stupefy her pain. She did not know it, but there, on that barren hill-top, she had reached the turning-point of all her life. Her fancy for Livingston was as yet a mere liking; one of the lost possibilities that vex and puzzle life; a feeling like one of those soft, fresh, fragrant blooms that star the apple-trees in spring; one of the thousand blossoms that may never ripen into fruit, fairer perhaps and

dearer for its useless sweetness than all the others for their promise of reward.

Had Arthur gone away then,—had Bell never seen him more,—she would have missed him at first, missed him and mourned over him; later on would have thought of him still as of a dear old friend; years after would have remembered him tenderly as a part of her vanished youth, something still left of the dear, happy, foolish days when she too had been in Arcady; would have met him again with a smile — with a sigh perhaps, over the sweet, the sad, the haunting memory of times long past.

“Is it a dull evening?” the girl thinks. A thousand silvery lights tremble and glisten on the river’s face; a pale gleam of red has crept behind the tall plumed palms upon the farther shore; the rosy flush mingles with the shining silvery lights that go and come and go again. Every thing is still and gray;—is it a little sad? Bell hardly knows; she is tired, discouraged, glad to rest. All her impatience and her anger have faded away in the quiet fading twilight. She hardly looks round when she hears Arthur calling her name.

“All alone, Bell? ‘Stumm und alleine,’ like that eccentric young woman in Bürger’s ballad? Ah, what a comfort to find a place where one can rest a little,” says Livingston, throwing himself down on the ground at her feet. “You have not an idea of the Herculean labors Fred and I have got through to-day.”

“I am glad to see you,” says Bell quietly. “I was not sure you would remember to come and say good-by before you started.”

“What! go off without seeing you again? Thanks for your flattering opinion of my— But never mind that. The *Ibis* will not start until the moon is high, ten or eleven o’clock perhaps. You have heard why Meredith has to give up *Philaë*?”

“Yes,” answers Bell, turning away. Then they are both silent.

It is a commonplace ending enough to the short

commonplace romance. "Have you heard?"— "I hope I shall be fortunate enough to meet you again— somewhere—some time." He presses her hand fervently; she smiles. "Good-by." Is either of them hurt? Surely the heart knoweth its own bitterness, and since when, pray, is the battle of life to be fought through without an occasional bruise?

"My vanity is receiving its death-blow," says Livingston presently, looking up with a smile; "do you know, I rather expected you would be sorry to say good-by to me?"

Sorry! Bell jumps up from her seat and walks off a few steps to the edge of the hill. Behind her, on the ground, lies a figure, a granite statue of some Egyptian prince, staring fixedly out across the stream. The stone she leans on was a temple's altar once—it might be a block of wood for all she knows or cares. "I hope you will enjoy yourself," she says in an odd constrained voice; "Mr. Meredith's excavations may be successful, and Thebes is very interesting, and—"

"And Egypt is generally considered a fine field of research for the antiquary. And science is one of the noblest pursuits of man. And—and what on earth has all that got to do with you and me?" cries Livingston, coming close up beside her and looking down into her face.

The old feeling is coming fast upon her again; it will be harder than ever to say good-by.

"I am sorry, awfully sorry, and you know it!" the girl answers passionately in a half-resentful way.

"How very much we shall miss each other, Miss Hamlyn? I wonder now which of us will forget the other first? Occupied and interested as I shall be by those absorbing excavations you mentioned a moment ago, of course to me the month or six weeks of your absence will pass like a flash. However, if I should be unreasonable enough to wish for livelier companions than the mummies, perhaps I may go off with some caravan—I've often talked it over with Fred—join

some caravan and cross the Great Desert into Syria, or explore the Soudan. What would you like to have from there? Shall I send you a lion's skin, if I am lucky enough to come across a lion? A man I know told me the shooting was still tolerable in the farthest part of the Soudan."

Bell does not answer.

"As for you, your sport will necessarily be of a milder kind," Livingston goes on, still speaking with a curious suppressed laughter in his voice; "I hardly think you will manage to get up any thing more exciting than a quarrel with Miss Campbell. Of course you will go on flirting with Captain Blake; habit will take the place of novelty there. I'm afraid you have been rather neglecting Blake of late, Miss Hamlyn! I met the poor fellow looking uncommonly subdued and downcast a moment ago."

The silvery reflections are growing fainter on the river now. The last rose-tint has faded away behind the trees; here and there a light begins to shine along the opposite shore; the noise of the Cataract seems nearer, louder, as the shadows fade into night. Its dull continuous voice sounds like a requiem to Bell.

"Well, I promised Meredith to be back soon," says Mr. Livingston suddenly. "Shall we shake hands and say good-by?"

Bell gives him her hand quietly. She has become perfectly passive now. It is all over; there is nothing more to be said.

"And won't you wish me luck before I go?"

"I—I hope you will be exceedingly happy," says poor Bell.

Livingston suddenly bends down and looks her closely in the face.

"Why, Bell," he says softly, "what is the matter, child?"

The sudden new tenderness in his voice is more than the girl's overtaxed nerves can endure. "It is nothing, nothing," she cries, covering her face with her hands;

"nothing at all. Oh, what must you think of me, Mr. Livingston?" — with a sudden intolerable pang of wounded pride — "I can assure you I am only tired. I have not felt very well all day, and now I am tired."

"Of course you are merely tired," says Arthur promptly, looking at her with a world of kindness in his eyes. "I am so sorry. It is all my fault; I have stupidly kept you standing here and have been teasing you for nothing for the last half hour. You must try and forgive me; for of course you understood all along that it was merely teasing, Bell. Your father has given me a room on the *Princess*. The Merediths will go to Thebes alone. As for me, I am going with you into Nubia. Now, am I to be forgiven?"

Mrs. Hamlyn is hard at work in the saloon of the dahabeh. Three or four sailors are bringing in boxes; carrying away piles of books. The doors and windows are all open, the curtains blowing wildly about. Outside, in the passage, the dragoman is giving orders at the top of his voice and finding fault with the men.

"And is the world coming to an end, Flossy dear?" cries Bell gaily, coming into the room; "Here, let me help you. I'm in the very mood to bring order into any kind of chaos. But what is it all about?"

"I have often thought our Irish servants at home were bad enough," says Mrs. Hamlyn solemnly; "often and often you have heard me say so, but of all exasperating — slow — obstinate — The other things are all in that corner, Ibrahim; be sure the man brings back the receipt and — Ibrahim! tell him not to touch those books! Those on the table are to stay exactly where Mr. Hamlyn put them."

"But why are you doing it, Flo?"

"Oh my dear child, don't ask me any questions now?" cries Mrs. Hamlyn, throwing herself back on the sofa and beginning to fan herself violently; "doing it for? Why, for Mr. Livingston of course. It is exactly like your father, never to have given me any

warning of what he meant to do, when he might have known that room was piled full of my boxes that I did not want to leave at Cairo. I have had to move a lot of stuff into your room, Bell ; and some of the things I thought you did not want I sent with mine to be stored away till we return. I sent that big leather desk of yours for one thing, it was always in the way. What was in it? nothing you cared for, I hope?"

"No, nothing I want to have with me—only some old letters," answers Bell.

Outside, two men were walking up and down in the shining moonlight.

"We shall miss you awfully, old fellow," said Meredith, puffing pensively away at his cigar ; "but I am heartily glad for your sake that you decided to go. Old Hamlyn is a perfect brick to have thought of it—or does the suggestion originate with mademoiselle his daughter? You are a daring man, Arthur, to tempt Providence by starting off for a month's trip with three young ladies, each a proficient in her different style at the great art of subjugating man."

"Poor Miss Horton! it is hardly fair to accuse her of any thing of the kind. That's a nice girl, Fred ; a real English type. Pretty enough ; intelligent enough ; plucky ; thoroughly well grounded in what little she has studied ; religious ; kind to the poor ; with moderate, well-regulated affections, well-settled creeds, well-selected precepts for every moral or social emergency. She is precisely the same to-day as she was yesterday and will be twenty years hence ; and the man who marries her will be sure of an excellent wife, who will never give him a moment's anxiety, or ever keep him from sleeping with well-fed *ennui* in his armchair every evening after dinner."

"By Jove! you could not say that much of her cousin."

"Miss Campbell belongs to quite another class. There is nothing of the *bourgeoise* about her. She

is a dreadful little flirt in her way, but one of the sunniest tempered girls I have ever known, although she never rests until she carries her point. I admire her style of face extremely."

"For my part, I think I prefer Miss Hamlyn to them both," said Meredith carelessly, "and she is the one with the greatest capacity for going wrong in her,—or for doing something great, for that matter. Miss Horton is too cool, Miss Campbell too selfish, for passionate feeling of any kind. Bell Hamlyn is more fortunate, or less so, as you choose to consider it. I can quite well imagine her throwing herself away and considering the world well lost where one of those other girls would be restrained by the fear of Providence and the other by the fear of consequences. You had better look out for yourself, old fellow. If Miss Hamlyn took it into her head to begin flirting with you in her rash and reckless fashion I would not give much for your chance of escaping quite heart-free. A girl capable of real feeling is a dangerous study, remember."

Livingston laughed. "Speak for yourself, my dear boy, 'I am not mad, most noble Festus.' Has a long course of the gallant Captain's conversation affected your intelligence, Fred, that you talk to me as though I were a school-girl?"

"The illustrious Solomon, who knew a thing or two in his day and generation, once remarked, speaking of a man very much in your position, and using that felicity of descriptive epithet which seems to have been common in those days, 'The fool hark —'"

"Oh, bother Solomon!" said Livingston impatiently.

"Certainly, if it gives you the slightest pleasure. I need not remind you that abuse is not argument, I suppose?" By this time they had walked half a mile or more beyond the limits of the town. The moon had already climbed high above the palm-tree tops; Assuan was sleeping quietly at their feet bathed in a broad white splendor of light. Around them lay the silent Desert; a ruined watch-tower crowned the hill, and farther on, the

moonlight glittered on the low white domes built over some Arab graves.

"This is the place I could imagine Juvenal to choose if ever his troubled spirit revisits 'the watery glimpses of the moon,'" said Arthur, pointing to the lonely tower. "Poor Juvenal! one can't help feeling sorry for him, banished to this extremest frontier post from all the pomp and glory of rich old Rome. What vigorous old Latin imprecations he must have used, wandering about here, chafing in impotent rage and hurling his anathemas against the world! Poor old fellow, he is quiet enough now to make up for it all! If there is one thing calculated to reconcile a man to being a failure it is the knowledge of how exceedingly little it matters after a few years whether you struggled with Fate, — toiled, suffered, endured, and ended by getting six lines and a half in the biographical dictionaries, — or whether you took life quietly and became the simplest expression of a failure — as I have done for instance."

"There is not a man I know more capable of distinguishing himself than you are, Livingston — if you would only make the effort."

"Exactly, my dear fellow; but that effort is precisely the one thing I have no inclination to attempt. No, I repeat it, dispassionately considered, I am a failure; but then, considered dispassionately, it makes so very little difference after all."

"If you would only be a little more ambitious, Arthur — "

"If I were only not myself, Meredith, I'll tell you what it is, — we both seem in the proper mood for confidences to-night. I belong to a small class of unfortunates, men who are unlucky enough to be the most useless of animals, — fastidious Americans. No one loves the dear old country better than I do, but I have been back once within the last ten years. I am neither a working-man nor a millionnaire, and, upon my word, I can't find any place for myself at home."

"I don't agree with you at all."

"Of course not. You are classified as 'our distinguished fellow-citizen ;' the *Nation* approves of your work ; later on Harvard University will offer you a Professorship, and you will end your days in the odor of Bostonian science and sanctity. But as for me, I have learned by experience that freedom at home means freedom to select your own kind of work, not freedom to be idle. It is a noble principle enough, but, like all other laws, has its exceptions. I happen to be one of them. I am a mere amateur ; quite harmless, but of no earthly use. I neither care for stocks nor stones, and, losing both business and science, how am I to be saved ? That is the question."

"And yet you went back when the war broke out, to fight for some of the very ideas you complain of ! "

"By Jove ! I should rather hope so ! and had the pleasure of being in sympathy with the general sentiment for four long years in consequence. Fine stirring days those were, Fred ; days in which to be proud of one's country, and proud of those fine plucky fellows, our countrymen. I'll go back again the next time we have another war."

"You will have gone back, married, and settled down into 'our distinguished townsman' yourself long before then, old boy."

"Not I. That's the worst of you working-men, you gladiators in the thick of the fight ; you don't half appreciate the merits of *nous autres*, the lookers-on, the audience to whom you play. We are the private Roman citizens, high out of sight in the topmost row of the Colosseum, ready to applaud you if you fall bravely, or adore you if you triumph ; men whom you have never even seen, but who know every one of you, have your good and bad points at their finger's end ; who thrill with enthusiasm and glow with pity and pride, have a hundred fine feelings about you that you never dream of, shouting your *ave Imperator* down below."

"Livingston, what is the use of talking to me in that way ? How on earth can you expect me to believe that

a man of your age is going to content himself with being a looker-on in life? Have you no ambition, Arthur? no energy? Because you have been disappointed with one part of your life, is that any reason for throwing up your hand before the game is fairly begun?"

"If you ask me—well, frankly, Fred, I think it is. I don't in the least aim at posing for that most absurd personage, a disappointed man; but between you and me, old friend, why not call things by their real name? I have been disappointed, how bitterly no one knows better than yourself, and I can no more feel as I did before than you could use your arm if it were broken. It is not an interesting subject. Let's talk of something else."

"Arthur," said Meredith suddenly, putting his hand affectionately on the other's shoulder, "do you often think of poor Alice now?"

Livingston looked at him silently for a moment, then his glance wandered off across the moonlit desert to the far-off dim horizon line.

"Yes," he answered slowly, "very often. The thought of Alice is a part of my life; it is always with me."

Meredith too was silent for a while.

"I cannot explain why it should be so, but I have the strangest wish to ask you all sorts of absurd questions to-night. Don't you ever mean to marry, Arthur?" he asked abruptly.

"Don't I ever mean to commit suicide?" retorted Arthur, laughing. "I marry? yes—the day I find some one who loves me well enough to put some life in that solid old repeater, my heart, which is fire-proof and frost-proof, and has only one defect—it has run down."

"But—"

"But, my dear boy, oblige me by looking at the time," drawing his watch out of his pocket, "You will have to postpone settling my matrimonial prospects for a month at least, if you mean to leave Assuan before morning."

CHAPTER X.

THE FIRST CATARACT.

"I SAY, Abdallah, tell him this kind of thing won't do, you know."

"Why not pitch him overboard and take her through ourselves?" suggests Blake. "It can't be more difficult than sailing a yacht."

"He is an infernal scoundrel, that's what he is—a cheating, infernal old scoundrel. And I don't believe one word of that story about the government having taken his men. I'll complain to our Consul about it, — I'll complain to our Consul, and I'll write to the Legation, and we will see, sir, we will see, if you are to be allowed to treat British travellers with this outrageous, this — this — indecent disrespect!" storms Mr. Campbell, shaking his stick at a tall, gaunt, melancholy, one-eyed Arab who stands with folded arms gazing impassively from the excited howadji to the conciliatory dragoman, secure in his strength, master of the situation and Sheikh of the Cataract.

"If you please, gentlemens, if you please," entreats the dragoman pathetically, "he is one very bad man if he get angry. There was one gentleman last year —"

"Hold your tongue, Abdallah, and tell him what I say!" shouts Mr. Campbell; "tell him the English Minister is a personal friend of mine, and I will have a complaint made to the Khedive if he keeps us here another hour."

Abdallah shrugs his shoulders.

"It is well, oh my brother, fear nothing. The Englishman's voice is as the roar of the water; his anger is as the breath of the khemseen; but his gold is as the sand of the Desert."

"Mashallah! They are dogs and sons of dogs. I will take them up to the next gate to-morrow."

"What does he say, Abdallah?"

"Well, sir, he want more money. He say the governor very bad governor, take all his men, give him nothing. You give him good backsheesh, to-morrow he come again, bring three, four thousand men," says Abdallah, with fine suggestive action.

"Very well," says Mr. Campbell resignedly, "I suppose they *are* imposed upon by their rascally government? You know what is right to give him, Abdallah. I leave it to you. Put it on my account, you know."

"Yes, sir. Ya, Sheikh Ferraj! go, oh my brother, and return if thou canst on the morrow. I think you had better give him one — two — sovereign now, sir? If any other dahabeah want to leave Assuan to-morrow, he come to us first."

"Here then; 'in for a penny, in for a pound,'" says Mr. Campbell, "Come to-morrow. That's right! Good fellow!" patting the tall sheikh on the shoulder like a dog.

The old man takes the gold gravely and presses it to his lips and forehead.

"The dog of a Christian gives little. Will he give more?" he asks.

"Patience! they always give more," answers Abdallah with the conviction of twenty years' experience.

"Awful old humbug that! I'd like to punch his venerable head for having brought us here," remarks Tom.

"What a dear picturesque old man! Would you not like to sketch him, Captain Blake? Look at him getting into his boat with all the other sheikhs. I counted nineteen of them all in their beautiful white dresses and beards taking coffee with our sailors, while you were scolding that poor old fellow, papa? They looked so nice and dignified, like the Patriarchs or — or something," says Gerty, joining the group.

"Rather hard on the Patriarchs, that," suggests Blake.

"Now I suppose Hamlyn will disapprove of my giving him that sovereign," says Mr. Campbell thoughtfully. "But as I told Hamlyn only yesterday, 'Without any reflection on America, my dear sir, you must admit that England is better known — better known. You don't take into account the effect of English *prestige*.' And now we have just had another proof of it; you saw how my allusion to the English Legation touched him. He quailed at once. Some people think these natives are difficult to manage. All nonsense! I never have the slightest trouble with them. Be firm, very firm — and generous — that's my principle. This little affair of ours just now was a perfect illustration of the way we govern India. Firmness and generosity. Never knew it to fail."

Early that morning a horde of scantily dressed Arabs had taken possession of both dahabeahs. Every rock on either hand of the channel they were to follow was covered with a shining, struggling, wriggling knot of dripping natives, now pulling at the long ropes fastened to the vessel's side, now diving into the foaming black water when some obstacle threatened to break the straining cable loose, now rowing wildly about to find the deepest, safest road amid the labyrinth of narrow tortuous ways. There were shouting, howling, swearing. One old gray-haired Nubian at the rudder, had roared himself into inarticulate hoarseness, and now stood beating the air with his hands, issuing frantic orders in a tragic whisper. The very cook had abandoned his galley and joined the group of sailors who lay at ease, reclined "like the high gods together," smoking placidly and looking calmly on. They had not been hired to take the boat up the Cataract.

Looking back from the deck of the *Cleopatra* they could see the *Princess* still threading her way across the wide bend of the river, where a strange confusion of black rocks lifted their fantastic and jagged forms above a howling wilderness of tossing surging water. "Noth-

ing at all compared to the St. Lawrence rapids," Mr. Hamlyn said to some one afterwards, "in fact we should be rather mortified if we could not get up a better show than that any day on the old Mississippi," — but a sufficiently exciting passage for all that.

Suddenly, after a couple of hours' pulling, and at the very moment when an Anglo-Saxon would have begun to get interested in the chances of putting the boats safely through the worst of it, the chiefs, as by a pre-concerted signal, had all struck work ; the dahabeahs had been firmly moored to the bank, and the howadji calmly informed that nothing more was to be done that day. And half an hour later three or four speculative boys, shooting the rapids on rolling logs of wood, for purely professional reasons and with an eye to backsheesh, were all that was left of the excited horde of natives.

They had stopped at a part of the river where the scenery is unspeakably dreary. As far as one can see the shore is strewn with hideous distorted rock-forms, — strange shapes suggestive of suffering and pain ; beyond them lies a lonely waste of sand, over which, that day, there arched a pale and livid sky.

Late in the afternoon Miss Hamlyn started off alone to walk some distance down the beach. From her abstracted look, the mechanical unobservant glance that wandered aimlessly from sky to shore, it was easy to see that some strong preoccupation had brought her out into the gray and chilly day. She walked steadily and quickly on without pausing or looking around until she reached a distant point, where, in the hollow of a high boulder, she found a soft white bed of the blanched river-sand, sheltered alike from observation and from the rising wind.

After a moment she drew out of her pocket a letter, looked at it doubtfully at first with unwilling eyes, then began to read it with a quick impatience, her glance running over the words as though trying to take it all in at once.

"Venice, November 27.

"MY DARLING BELL, why do you write so seldom to me now?" the letter ran, "it seems long since I heard from you last, and difficult to believe that you have written as often as you had the chance. Am I to think — but no! nothing but hearing it from your own lips could make me think you had forgotten me.

"As you see, I am still lingering on in Venice. I love the dear old place better than ever now. While I am here I still feel near to you. When I get very lonely, I walk down to the *riva* and look at the last P. and O., and think how easily I could run over to Alexandria and meet you on your return — if only I were sure you cared to have me come.

"Shall I try and give you an idea of the kind of life I am leading? There are few foreigners in Venice this winter; one or two families; half a dozen artists. We meet each other often; generally in the evening and at the Raymonds, whose house has become the social head-quarters for the Americans here. Mary Raymond, the eldest daughter, is charming — she reminds me a little of you. She plays remarkably well. I go there often when I feel out of tune or perplexed with my work, and listen to Bach or Beethoven until the world seems an easy straightforward place to live in after all. Fine music simplifies life to me; it lifts one so far above that confusion of weak half-truths, of doubts, and puzzling blendings of right and wrong, which rolls like a mist at times across one's soul. And I do not know how I could ever get through this weary winter without you, dear, if it was not for the Raymonds. They have been most kind to me.

"To-day the weather has turned cold at last. The wind is blowing the canal into waves that break and fret monotonously upon the steps below. I hear their sound echoing through all this great empty palace as I write. Outside, the day is full of cold sunshine and the clash of jangling bells. I like that old church of

the Salute opposite, bad style and Renaissance though it be. To-night they are celebrating high mass. The door is wide open ; from my window I can look in and see, above the heads of the surging crowd, the burning lights on the altar, shining through the blue incense-smoke. Peals of loud crashing organ-music come swelling out into the twilight ; a yellow sunset is shining behind the domes ; a flight of swallows circles past, crossing with sharp quick turns against the sky.

"Some day I mean to paint that church against some broad simple effect of light, and send the picture to you. I should like to have you see all that I look at, Bell.

"I am rather busy just now, finishing that study of San Giorgio—you saw the sketch, I think. I am painting it large—a companion to the Campagna picture you liked once. And for the love of the thing I'm copying that glorious Giorgione at the Giovanelli palace. Miss Raymond got permission from the prince at the same time that I did, so we often work there together. She has some sense of color, and is improving I think.

"You will say that I am beginning to resemble that hero of yours in that dear foolish old ballad of Owen Meredith's :—

‘I write and write
For the mere sake of writing to you, Dear.’

Do you remember the day we read that together ? and how vexed you were because I laughed at it ? and the rose-tree by the wall ? and the flower you gave me from your hair ? I have it still, quite dead and colorless now, but dear to me as every thing coming from you is dear.

"Tell me all about yourself when you write. Have you met Livingston ? do you like him ? Why are you so silent, Bell ? Why do you let time slip between us and push us farther and farther apart each day ? Answer me, love.

“Yours always—always and always,
“GEORGE FERRIS.”

Miss Hamlyn read this letter twice, weighing the value of each expression at the second reading with a scrupulous care, in curious contrast with the first hasty perusal. Her face hardened and grew fixed as she went on ; her hands fell into her lap ; she sat perfectly still, staring blankly out at the heavy threatening sky.

Within the last hour a change had crept over the spirit of the day. The wind had steadily increased in force, shifting from point to point until a strong *khem-seen* was darkening the sky and lashing into foam the dull yellowish-gray surface of the water. The air was full of the roar of the rapids,—as the river rushed viciously past, dashing itself recklessly against the boulders in the midst of the cataract it seemed to be snatching at the bank, trying to tear away the huge black rock behind which Miss Hamlyn had taken refuge. Dense clouds of fine yellow sand were blowing across the line of livid light at the horizon, thickening the air as if with smoke.

The sun was setting, but the few rose-colored clouds that floated for a moment above the opposite bank were soon driven away by the wind that bent and shook and tossed and tore the thin green branches of an old mimosa tree—the one living thing amidst a wide wilderness of desolation. For at this point of the river the scenery is like the landscape in some awful dream. A horror of great silence clings to the abandoned shore ; it seems a spot deserted and accursed ;—the rough end of the world, one step removed from chaos. And the very rocks that strew the shore have a peculiar character of their own, worn and scooped out by the water, hollowed into dark round pools that might well be the witches' cauldron in Macbeth, or heaped up into rude stone platforms—fit altars for strange sacrifice to old forgotten gods.

In her preoccupation Bell had wandered farther than she knew from the shelter of the dahabeah. As the afternoon suddenly darkened she sprang to her feet and began hastily retracing her steps. Like all imagi-

native people, Bell Hamlyn was peculiarly sensitive to atmospheric influences. At that time perhaps half of the most decisive actions of her life had been but an unconscious rendering of the weather into feeling. The sky had been cloudless, and she had felt happy and confident with all the force of youth and summer sunshine ; or some dull gray mist had settled down, blotting out the landscape and stealing with subtle discouragement through all her thoughts. That evening the wailing of the coming storm seemed to chime in with her mood and give a voice to all the anxiety and disquiet which filled her heart.

Something in George's tone, some subtle difference of thought or expression troubled her with an intangible sense of loss. Of late she had begun to miss her old self-confidence and, half unconsciously, to trust the more to the steady faithfulness of the man she did not love. The slightest hint of change in him filled her with doubt and distrust of all other things.

Bell had never fancied that Livingston loved her : had never from the very beginning admitted that he might learn to care for her with more than the half-friendly, half-indifferent liking which he showed so freely now. At first she had refused to realize how precious a part of her life that careless liking had become ; within the last few days, forced to admit the feeling, she had ceased to struggle against what seemed like fate, telling herself that, once away from Egypt — once back in the safe simple world of her accustomed life — this mad, this hopeless infatuation would vanish like a dream before "the common light of day."

"No one need suffer for it but myself," she thought, "and I — well, let the consequences to me be what they will, I shall have been with him ; that is worth whatever it may cost me. Why not let myself drift — be happy for a month ? Arthur will never know it, and as for George — I'll give him my whole life to make up for it afterwards." But that George should change, that George should swerve, though but by a

hair's-breadth, from his devotion was a possibility she had never faced before.

Ferris had become a sort of incarnate conscience to Bell ; the one real thing in the world of half-truths and shifting indecision where she had lived of late, and the mere suspicion of his defection was full of an exquisite pain. For when we have fallen below our own ideal of right-doing we learn to grow strangely jealous of the slightest wavering in another's faith ; dreading perhaps the knowledge that our own shortcomings are rather owing to the common weakness of poor human nature, than to that peculiar force of temptation which is the only justification we could plead.

It was almost dark before Bell reached the dahabeah again. As she turned to go in some sudden impulse made her look back. A pall of driving sand hung in heavy obscurity over all the desolate scene, but as she looked, one long dull streak of livid red ran like a stain of blood across the lowering sky.

The postal service of the Nile ceases at Assuan. Livingston was busy all the evening preparing a packet of letters to be sent off before they cut adrift from the last link which bound them to civilization. "I hate letters, and never want to receive or answer another one," Bell had replied to some question about her contribution to the mail-bag ; now she lay listlessly on the sofa, a book in her hand, but apparently not reading, as every now and then she gave a quick impatient sigh or looked furtively over at the absorbed face of her companion. Presently she took up her book again, but the lines merely ran together before her eyes :— George and Miss Raymond — Miss Raymond and George, — the words seemed written between the pages of Lepsius' scientific speculations — seemed speaking with monotonous iteration in the regular creak of the rudder, beaten to and fro by the rushing water — seemed calling to her through the sighing of the wind.

A sudden impulse made her start to her feet. "She went to the table and began to write :—

“ I want to see you and talk to you, George. I want to see you more than I can say. This is the last time I can write to you for a month or more. To-morrow we sail into Nubia and on and on far into the shadows of the past. This is my last will and testament, you know ; to-morrow I shall have drifted out of the nineteenth century ; have dropped down an *oubliette*, be gone past reach or recall.

“ It frightens me. I feel as though we were going into a land peopled by ghosts. To-night Egypt seems to weigh me down with all its weight of old dead centuries ; even your Italy, when I think of it, seems exhausted and over-full of memories. I am intensely American to-night ; in spite of all the noisy newness of our life at home I long to be in it again. I miss our crisp vital air, free of remembrance and suggestion. I’m sick of associations ; — tired of thinking of what has been ; — tired of knowing that every thing passes away. . . . Why do you speak so much of that Miss Raymond ? Are you forgetting me ? Is *no one* capable of caring long ? Sometimes I think no one ; not even myself. Think of me often, George. You are the one being I believe in in this world. I think if I were to lose my faith in your steady friendship I — ”

Friendship ! the word seemed a cowardice on her part — “ in your steady love,” she wrote.

And then Miss Hamlyn looked up. Livingston was still writing fast ; her eyes followed with a kind of fascination the rapid movement of his pen. She had never felt so far apart from him as at that moment ; had never perhaps realized so forcibly the utter hopelessness of her love. She saw him silent, absorbed, forgetting her very existence for the sake of people whose names she did not even know, and a sharp pang of jealousy ran through her as she thought of all the past, of all the future years of his life, in which she had had, and never could have, either place or part. A discouraged feeling of her utter unimportance in his eyes prompted her to turn with lonely longing to the nearest friendly hand

that was held out to her. George's devotion prevented her from feeling humiliated by the other's indifference, and George —

Arthur glanced round as he reached the end of the last page.

"What! writing too, Miss Hamlyn? Who is the happy mortal for whose sake you are breaking your vow of silence, I wonder?"

"I'm writing to Mr. Ferris," answered Bell. She had spoken with a certain impulse of defiance, and the words startled her, once said; but a moment's reflection showed her that she had told her secret to inattentive ears.

"George Ferris, you mean? I did not know you ever wrote to him," said Arthur carelessly, smiling across at her serious face. "He's a good fellow, Ferris; hasty at times and apt to throw himself headlong into any thing he undertakes, but a staunch friend for all that, and true as steel. Remember me to him, will you? There! that's my last effusion to-night. Are you not almost through as well? Give me your letter to post with mine and come up on deck a moment. I've seen nothing at all of you to-day; and see! the moon is breaking through the clouds: we shall have fine weather again to-morrow."

From the deck they looked across a boundless waste of sand that lay barren and bleached in the uncertain moonlight. Fantastically shaped masses of rock gave a weird look to the shadowless desert, barred here and there with long dark lines as the trailing clouds drifted slowly across the moon.

"Here, put on this cloak," said Livingston, as Bell shivered at the touch of the chilly air; "you imprudent child! what would become of you if I were not here to take care of you, I wonder."

The cloak was a large one, lined and trimmed with fur. Livingston wrapped it closely about her, and, as he did so, a sudden sense of comfort came to Bell. It is impossible to feel utterly lonely or neglected when one is warm.

"What a horrible day this has been!" she said, laugh-

ing ; "I seem to have been living in a perpetual nightmare since this morning. I begin to believe it is quite true that the khineen affects one's nerves."

"As for me, I am in a state of virtuous complacency. I always feel as though I had earned full absolution for all past shortcomings on those rare days in which I achieve a letter."

"Oh, that reminds me," said Bell, starting up ; "will you give me back that letter of mine, please ? I've decided not to send it. It—it was rather stupid, and I want to write quite a different one instead."

"Too late !" said Arthur, shaking his head with mock solemnity. "Do you see that light moving along far down that bank ? That is Mahmoud's lantern, and he is carrying our letters back to Assuan. It's too late for repentance now, Miss Hamlyn ; too late for postscripts or for second thoughts. For good or ill we have said our say, and shall have to abide by what we have written."

CHAPTER XI.

DESERT SANDS.

A CLEAR soft moonlight, not very brilliant, but so full of diffused light that the sandhills on the further side of the Cataract were of a pale rose red, as though the sunset's glow still burned there in reflected fire, their velvety texture and deep rich shadows sharply contrasting with the blanched river sand at their feet.

"I never saw a night so full of color before," remarked Gerty, as the sandal pushed off from the *Princess* and the men began pulling across the river ; "the red-gold look of that sand is fairly startling under the blue of the sky, and it is curious too, for 'Egyptian darkness' is by no means a mere figure of speech. Last night for instance was perfectly black."

"And have you noticed how low the skies are here? one never gets a sense of height or space at night as one does at home."

"I read that same remark in a book the other day, Miss Hamlyn," said Tom Campbell; "and the author, a clergyman, and one of your countrymen, by the way, poetically suggests that the skies are lower in Egypt because they are 'pressed down by the feet of the angels,' meaning, I imagine, those among the glorified spirits who missed the time or the means to make the Eastern tour in the flesh."

"A sort of celestial Overland Route into Syria, I suppose. If he was a clergyman, I must respectfully submit to superior knowledge of the subject; but I should have thought that flying would have been at once more angelic and quicker," said Arthur, laughing. "Well, here we are; hold on, Miss Horton, don't rise before the boat lands, please — there, now! give that man your hand."

A high abrupt bank rose from the water's edge. Scrambling up its steep and slippery side, over beds of loose black slate, which broke and slid away beneath their feet, they reached the level of the plain, and, walking some distance inland, climbed one of the highest hills to get that view of the Desert by moonlight for which they had crossed the river.

At the foot of the hill the sailors stretched themselves out upon the sand, the moonlight accentuating their white turbans and throwing each figure out in sharpest relief. The dry soft wind of the Desert seemed rather to breathe than to blow across the moonlit waste; a low range of hills shutting out all sight of the river deepened their sense of utter solitude.

"What a heavenly night," said Bell, throwing off her hat as she spoke and resting her head against the rock; the moonlight upon her face and on the loose masses of her blonde hair.

"Yes, this was really worth waiting for; and I feel almost inclined to forgive that old heathen for having

kept us three whole days in the Cataract," said Blake. "By the way, are we going to stop at Philæ to-morrow. Campbell? You are the great authority for all useful information of late."

"Depends on the wind. Can't say till we get there. The governor wants to push on whenever we can on the way up; coming down we can stop as often as you like, but just now it would be no joke to lose the wind and get stuck for a week on a sand-bank."

"Then we had better pray for a dead calm if we want a few temples to-morrow. Won't you be sorry if we have to pass them, Miss Campbell? we all know what a passion you have for antiquities of any kind."

"Why, I don't think I dislike the temples *much*, I'm sure!" said Gerty in a naïve way; "in fact, I think ruins are very nice, sometimes—for picnics. What I don't care for are all those horrid cat-headed, hawk-headed, and dog-headed gods and goddesses, and all the hieroglyphs and things. I haven't the slightest idea what they mean, and I don't really believe that any of you are very sure. As far as I can make out, whenever Bell discovers some new fact in Wilkinson, Mr. Livingston contradicts it out of Sharpe; Tom convicts them both of ignorance on the strength of Lepsius; and Kate bears down upon them all with her beloved scarlet 'Murray,' like the 'thin red line that stood at Waterloo,' and proclaims triumphantly a state of general ignorance."

"And yet some of us have faint glimmerings of intelligence on the subject, Gerty."

"I'm afraid Miss Campbell buried all her enthusiasm among the mummy-pits at Thebes. I've noticed since then that—"

"Don't let them tease you about it, Miss Campbell. I'll engage to tell you in five minutes every thing those two fellows have taken a month to find out *à grands coups de dictionnaire*."

"'Livingston's Extract.' It's a rival of Liebig's

in the amount it compresses in a small space," said Blake.

"Yes, and it's kindly adapted to weak mental digestion as well—a regular 'food for babes.' Go on, Livingston. We're waiting to hear your version of what we know."

"Well, Miss Campbell, since you are doomed to be victimized, listen! To a great extent you are perfectly right in calling our wisdom guesswork, but, as far as it has yet been discovered, we believe that the old Egyptians had two distinct forms of religion; the one for the priests, which was a pure though mystical formula of faith; and that for the people, which was a much grosser and plainer statement, of which the symbols seem to have usurped the place of the ideas they represented, until, gradually, as Egypt declined, they entirely obliterated the original idea, and instead of grand impersonal conceptions the people ended by worshipping the material signs of their gods. A great many people—and I am one of them—believe that the primary Egyptian idea was of one God; those animal-headed friends of yours, the minor gods, were merely expressions of some particular attribute of the Deity. It was just as when the Jews called God the Almighty, or the Everlasting, or the Lord of lords: imagine a distinct symbol for each one of those names and you get an idea of Egyptian mythology."

"Or you don't get it—just as it happens," said Tom, laughing. "But the difference between those minor gods—"

"Ah, that's more complicated. You see each temple had a sort of trinity it especially affected: sometimes it was a local one; sometimes it represented Amun-Ra, who was a very big gun indeed, and Maut, the Mother, with Chonso their son, who was one of the gods of the moon and has the head of a hawk. The most puzzling part of it is that they are constantly changing and appropriating each other's attri-

butes and distinctive marks. Isis, for instance, took the character of all the other goddesses in turn ; sometimes she was Queen of Heaven ; sometimes she represented eternal motherhood ; at others was Hecate, the goddess of enchantments. Philæ—where we shall be to-morrow, I hope—was especially dedicated to the worship of the second trinity—Isis, Osiris, and Horus their son. They were the only group of gods worshipped in every city alike, and were feared less and loved more than the great gods, as being between them and the human race. They were supposed to have reigned on earth in some prehistoric time, and were looked on, I dare say, very much as some devout Roman Catholic would look on some saint in especially good repute. What you ought particularly to understand is the relation of Horus, who was the Principle of Good, to Isis and Osiris. Horus was like one of our modern women—he had a 'mission' in life and he failed to carry it out—or at all events he seems to have failed, since his aim was the avenging of his father's murder by the destruction of Typho, the Principle of Evil, who seems sufficiently flourishing even now."

"But I thought you told me the other day that the early Egyptians had no theological idea of evil," objected Bell. "Surely I have not got that bit of information upside down so quickly as that."

"No, you're right enough that far. What I told you was, that *sin*, or Sethi,—do you suppose that is the origin of Satan, Campbell?—was one of the Egyptians' later inventions. In the beginning of their creed evil is merely the antithesis of good. Both coming alike from some supreme power, evil and good were the same at bottom in their eyes—His will working in different ways. It was a grand idea at the start, and the Greeks, I think, had degenerated when they formed their mythology of beautiful but fallible gods."

"It would be curious to know how much of their

religion they got from here, changing and modifying it of course, as when they made Venus out of Athor, or Minerva out of Neith. Jupiter himself is not a bad imitation of Amun-Ra ; then there is Charon and the Styx taken bodily from the death lakes, and at least half of Plato's philosophy."

"For that matter, all religions have a strong family likeness to each other," said Tom. "I was reading in a Chinese book the other day—it was a translation, Miss Hamlyn, so you need not look so incredulous,—that 'the name that can be named is not the Eternal Name.' Now, is not that exactly the same idea the Egyptians had when they swore their most solemn oaths *by Him who sleeps in Philæ*? For poor old Osiris, whom Livingston is pleased to criticise and catalogue in this fashion, was too important a personage even to be spoken of in his time. Herodotus, you know, always calls him the one whose name he may not mention ; and, although every one knew his body was buried here in the Cataract at our feet, no one except the highest priests, or perhaps the king who was the head priest of all, ever knew or mentioned his name."

"Then I wish you were one of the minor priests, Tom," said Gerty mournfully, "one of the very, very ignorant priests without an idea about your religion ! "

Livingston laughed. "That was meant for me, Tom ; pass it over ! Miss Campbell, I beg leave to apologize. We. have been improving the occasion in the most unjustifiable way, and you have borne it all like an angel. Blake, be amusing ! you haven't said a word for the last half hour."

"One never knows what an American means by amusement," said Captain Blake lazily. "I had an instance of that the other day. Do you happen to know what sort of a thing a 'sheet-and-pillow-case party' is, Miss Campbell?"

"A 'sheet-and' *what*?"

"Pillow-case-party.' It's an American invention, and flourishes chiefly in California by what I've heard.

Like all other witty things the main idea is very simple. You begin by selecting some house where there are either children or very young people, and at a certain hour in the evening those of the friends of the family who aspire to being amusing rendezvous at the house, wrap sheets like mantles about them until they entirely conceal their form and dress, and draw pillow-cases over their heads and shoulders, cutting two holes out for the eyes. Then the gas is turned down, and the victim — I beg your pardon, Livingston, I mean the happy individual about to be amused — who has been carefully kept out of the drawing-room all the evening on some pretext or other, is sent in alone. The gas flares up, and the child finds itself surrounded by a circle of silent white spectres. The effect is striking, as you may imagine, and particularly cheerful, and no one has yet questioned the amusing character of its results."

"Won't somebody please compliment Captain Blake on his wonderful powers of invention?" asked Bell. "As for me, I'm too speechless with admiration to do them justice."

"It's a fact, Miss Hamlyn, I can assure you. I was told of it first by a pretty Californian girl — awfully jolly girl she was by the way — whom I met on the P. & O. She said it was great fun, but they had to give up the habit, because when the children went into convulsions it was apt to become awkward for the guests who caused them."

"Oh, yes," said Livingston gravely, "that is quite one of our national pastimes. It was only because statistics showed that 'sheet-and-pillow-case parties' were rapidly extinguishing the infant population of the United States that our paternal government put a reluctant stop to them."

"Captain Blake's legends remind me of those I used to hear from my old Swiss music-teacher last year," said Bell. "She was a very worthy old lady, of the cast-iron and whalebone type, with the largest nose I ever saw on a

human being, and a holy horror of *ces demoiselles américaines*. She rather took a fancy to me, and used to be tremendously compassionate over my ill luck at not being Swiss. Perhaps you don't know it, but some one tried to murder somebody else in Geneva last year. All Switzerland was convulsed in consequence; and finally, after hearing the attempt—for it wasn't even a success—talked over every day for some two weeks, I mildly suggested to Mademoiselle Carnu one day that we were rather more accustomed to murders in America—indeed you seldom took up a newspaper without finding one or two new ones reported. 'Ah mais oui, en Amérique! je crois bien!' she said. 'Why, you are so reckless about human life en Amérique that when two railway trains start from a station at about the same time they always race across the country to see which can get on the rails first!'

"That was the same woman you were telling me about, who had been to Italy, wasn't it, Bell?"

"Yes, the same one."

"What is the Italian story, Miss Hamlyn?" asked Blake.

"Oh, merely that the poor old thing had been a governess in the family of a Russian general, and travelled all over Italy with him and his two daughters. She had wonderful tales to tell about Italy, but what seemed to have impressed her most strongly was the number of statues exposed *en pleine vue*. When she heard we were going to Rome she warned me about them, telling me how whenever the General called her attention to any picture or statue while they were in Italy, she always made a point of turning her head in that direction, 'not to give an example of insubordination to *ces demoiselles*, you understand,' but for her own satisfaction she always closed her eyes. She assured me that with a little tact, *une jeune personne qui se respecte* could go all through Italy without seeing any thing at all."

"Like that American lady—what was her name

now?— who went to the statue gallery of the Vatican last winter with a double vail on — ‘It was such a comfort ; it made every thing so nice and indistinct.’ ”

“ What an awful slander ! ” said Bell, laughing ; “ and what a shame it is to talk such nonsense here ! Do look at that Desert all of you ? Did you ever see any thing more beautiful ? ”

While they had been talking the moon had climbed high above their heads, and now the light fairly flooded the broad unbroken sweep of sand at their feet that lay wind-blown into ripples and folds and curves like the surface of a sleeping sea. One of the sailors had gone down the hill with his gun on the search for some straying jackal ; they could see him crossing the plain a quarter of a mile off, his silhouette cutting sharply against the shining sands, the moonlight catching on the fluttering white folds of his dress.

“ That space looks even more infinite than the sea,” said Blake.

“ That’s the very charm of the Desert,” said Arthur absently. “ It’s suggestive ; any thing could come out of that distance. Like life, it seems to contain room for ‘ the grand Perhaps,’ as Browning calls it. I wonder how many people would accept the facts, if it was not for the possibilities, of life ? ”

“ I wonder if the possibilities include my carrying some of this sand home ? ” said Kate ; “ I should like some to put in an hour-glass for Aunt Mary, Gerty. Don’t you think she would like to have something brought to her from the Cataract ? ”

“ Yes, do : that’s a good idea — and get enough for me at the same time. I’ll take mine to Lady Somers,” said Gerty carelessly. “ Captain Blake, hold your hand out ; I’m going to give you a sensation. There ! isn’t that delicious ? ” letting a thin stream of the shining sand trickle through her fingers as she spoke.

Every thing Miss Campbell did was nice, Captain Blake assured her confidentially. “ You remind me of Tennyson, Miss Campbell,” he added aloud. “ Don’t

you remember the line — where 'Love took up the glass of time,' and

'All the moments, lightly shaken, ran themselves in golden sands.'"

"Thanks. But don't compare me to Love, please. I decline listening to any more mythology to-night, even when it comes under the disguise of a compliment."

"I never could feel very sorry for that young man in Locksley Hall," remarked Tom. "He was too eloquent to be very miserable."

"I always thought he was rather a prig," said Arthur; "I haven't the slightest doubt his remarks on 'the fairy tales of science' were the cause of Cousin Amy's inconstancy. He probably bored her to death; and after all, under the circumstances, her jilting him was precisely one of those 'long results of time' he ought to have been prepared for."

"But how could he have bored her, when he loved her? That doesn't sound probable," Miss Horton objected.

"Well, I don't know. According to my theory of the universe it is chiefly the men who wish to be loved — women want to love some one."

"Yes; really good women have a praiseworthy mania for self-sacrifice, which I, for one, am not inclined to discourage," said Livingston, laughing.

"I should hardly have said that a tendency to self-sacrifice was at the root of much mischief in the career of the modern young lady," remarked Blake; "most of the girls I know can't fall in love with a man who hasn't a certain sufficient income. It isn't that they are particularly mercenary in their views — I believe some of them would like to do it just for the fun of the thing — but they simply can't manage it. Until they've passed thirty you won't find a shadow of romance in anybody now-a-days. The women seem to grow sentimental in inverse proportion to their capacity for making other people so."

"Why not say that the hearts of fashionable women

are like winter pears — they soften when they're out of season?"

"I suppose this sort of thing is merely the reaction from all the commitments you have to pay us in public," said Gerty resignedly. "Go on, please. We are incapable of love — what next I should like to know. If it's any thing very crushing I hope you will break it to us by degrees."

"No; we'll be merciful," said Blaize; "for my part I'm ready to promise not to reveal my discoveries to the general public."

"Oh, let's be generous while we're about it," said Arthur laughing. "Let's admit that women would be worse — if they knew how!"

"No, but — isn't you really believe that people have just as many 'grandes passions' now-a-days as they ever had?" asked Bell abruptly.

X "Well, you see, I'm not a fair judge. I've peculiar ideas on the subject," said Arthur, turning to her and speaking more seriously. "According to my definition of what love means, the capacity for loving is as rare a gift as genius. Nine-tenths of the people in the world can like each other; can feel friendly towards each other; can even be entirely sympathetic to each other; — but the remaining few can love each other: and, I am bound to say, very often come to grief in consequence. People have tastes, preferences, and sentiments now-a-days, — passions and intolerant convictions of any kind are in rather bad style."

"With your romantic ideas you ought to live in Germany, Livingston."

"My dear fellow, as far as I can see, there isn't any place at all where I can live! I hate sentimentality, and the Germans are out-and-out sentimentalists; Anglo-Saxons on both sides of the water 'go in' for flirting, and the French adore each other. I might take refuge in Italy perhaps. The Italians haven't any sense of the ridiculous, and so may possibly stand some small chance of carrying out my theories."

"But did you ever actually know anybody who had the kind of 'grande passion' one reads of in novels?" asked Gerty curiously.

"I know that it exists," he answered quietly. "Occasionally some man does meet some woman whom he simply never forgets, even after half a lifetime spent apart. It is not common—and hardly desirable I should say."

Some curious constrained intonation in his voice made Miss Hamlyn glance quickly up. He was looking thoughtfully off across the plain as though looking far back into the past; but as he noticed her movement of surprise—"Are we not getting awfully sentimental ourselves?" he asked suddenly; "you all look as though you were meditating on the most melancholy of subjects—you especially, Miss Horton; you look positively tragic!"

"Well, you see, I'm so awfully sleepy?" said Kate.

Tom Campbell took out his watch. "By Jove! it is late! Those of you who don't care to stay and see the sun rise had better hurry home."

"Suppose we try going down the other side?" suggested Gerty. "That great slope of sand looks too smooth for me not to long to walk over it."

Going down the hill was a divine sensation; something like going downstairs in a dream, an indescribable motion between sliding and flying. The shifting sand poured after them in great cool soft waves that buried their feet up to their knees. As they drew near the river again the air seemed to quiver with the sound of the far-off falling rapids. They rowed slowly home across a river of moonlight, the men singing a slow sleepy song as they bent to their splashing oars.

CHAPTER XII.

THE FIRST KISS.

“The day
Was perfect as love, and the island lay
Cradled and kissed by the seas asleep.”

JOAQUIN MILLER.

A SHARP turn in the river's course, the rugged hills drew back on either side ; the men gave a last long pull at the ropes ; a gust of wind came tearing after them as they rounded the point ; and the boats flashed out their great white sails and seemed to lift and spring forward like winged creatures struggling to escape. Before them lay a long smooth curve of glassy water, above which rose and drooped the stately palms of Philæ. It was already late in the afternoon. The strip of beach and wide stone platform in front of the open-air temple were in deep shadow, but as they neared the landing-place they could see scattered columns and high majestic piles still shining through the trees ; the palms that crown the island still waved their topmost branches in a radiant sea of light, and Philæ still lay basking in the sun.

From the water's edge a narrow path climbs the steep bank covered with sweet white lupin flowers, winds its way past piles of broken stones and rubbish, and, dividing on the top of the hill, crosses the open space to the great temple of Isis, or leads directly on to the terrace overhanging the river in front of Pharaoh's Bed. The temples here are not among the oldest in Egypt, although that of Isis, built by the Ptolemies, is supposed to have been erected on the foundation of an ancient edifice, but the site is one of unsurpassed loveliness, and the

whole island down to the very river's brink is mournful with ruins or beautiful with palms.

For a long time the newly arrived party wandered about, in and out of the different temples, stopping to look at the painted flower-shaped capitals, the color of a peacock's breast ; walking between long slender rows of colonettes, covered with hieroglyphs ; discovering something new at every step ; here, a half unfinished column, looking as though the priest might return at any moment to resume his place and work ; there, the outline of some sculptured figure buried beneath the drifted sand ; calling to each other across the spaces and filling the silent temple-halls with a sense of fresh young life and merriment.

"Campbell, if you have a piastre left in your pocket, do run down to the boat, like a good fellow, and back-sheesh the man who broke our towing rope," said Arthur ; "the beggar deserves any thing he can get for giving us an excuse to stop here a couple of hours in the very teeth of a fair wind."

"Do come and look at the place I've just discovered," cried Gerty, "and let us all go and sit down there a while, for I'm tired to death with the climbing."

The place was a very small temple or chamber rather, at the farthest end of the island. Two deep openings in the wall looked out over a sheer depth of parapet to where the broad calm river flowed placidly by without a ripple or a shadow upon its shining breast.

"Hark ! " said Miss Hamlyn suddenly, holding up her hand ; "I'm sure I hear something that is not the wash of the water. There ! don't you hear it now ? Listen."

"It is only our men singing down at the boats," said Campbell ; "I saw them getting out their drums and taraboukas as we started off. They are celebrating our having passed the Cataract I suppose."

"I'm getting to be very fond of their music," Bell remarked. "At first it always made me think of the songs the daughters of Israel sang by the waters of

Babylon — it is so full of wailing cries, like the mourning of captives over what is gone ; but when I asked Ibrahim to translate some of the words to me he said nobody could understand them, 'they were all about love and nonsense.'

"Take my advice, and don't try and discover what they really do mean, Miss Hamlyn — that is, if you have any weakness for retaining your poetic illusions. The last time I was in Naples I fell in love with a most exquisitely pathetic air that I heard the people singing in the streets. It was in dialect, and I couldn't understand a word of it of course, but the melody was so sweet and so plaintive that I took an immense lot of trouble to find some one to translate it into English for me. I'd heard a great deal about the unaffected poetry of the peasant, and I rather looked forward to the result. In this case the poetry was a lament over the fact that macaroni had become so dear that the singer could not take his lady love out to supper ! "

Livingston laughed. "What an unreasonable fellow you are, Campbell! as though the lack of macaroni was not a subject replete with the highest elements of tragedy. What are all the pangs of unsatisfied love, I should like to know, when you've once felt the pangs of unsatisfied hunger ? "

"Mr. Livingston speaks as though he had been deprived of food from his earliest infancy. Can't somebody run down to the beach and get him a biscuit ? "

"I will speak to our cook the moment I get back to the boat," said Bell.

"Laugh as much as you like," said Arthur good-naturedly, "I'm an authority on the subject, unfortunately for me. You don't happen to know it, but I spent three months at Andersonville at one time, Miss Hamlyn."

"Andersonville ? that was one of the Southern prisons during your last war, was it not ? " asked Kate.

"A prison ? well, hardly that. It was one of the ways the chivalric gentleman of the South discovered for the

extermination of as much as possible of 'the Northern scum.' It wasn't at its worst when I was there — at least I've heard some stories from men who went in after my time which show that practice counts for a good deal, even in the art of torturing one's prisoners — but it was bad enough, I can tell you. It was not so much that half of us had no shelter from the heat and had to live in the ground in holes we dug out for ourselves with our hands, like wild beasts, — but we were starved, you know. I've seen men, men who were gentlemen once, spring at each other's throats like dogs to get a chance at a bone that was thrown to them by some sentry who liked the fun of seeing two Yankees rolling on the ground like hungry skeletons. Sometimes they would cut off our water-ration for the day — a mere experiment, just to see how much killing we could stand. It was burning summer weather when I was there, and there was a spring of water in full sight, about thirty steps outside the 'line' we were not allowed to pass. The sentries used to sit upon the stockade around the enclosure and shoot our men dead whenever thirst madened them into trying to crawl down to the water. They used to boast that it was better than any target practice — made regular sharp-shooters of the men. 'The fellows who were wounded — well, it isn't the kind of story to tell before ladies. I don't know what made me begin it, I'm sure.'

"How did you get away, Livingston? Were you exchanged?" asked Blake.

"No ; after I had been there nearly three months I was transferred with a lot more to another prison, and we managed to get a revolver, shoot three of our guards, and escape on the road. We had rather a hard time of it too, getting back to our lines : we could only travel at night of course ; in the day-time we hid in the woods. Five of us got off together, and one of them, poor fellow, had gone mad from ill-treatment ; he had become a perfect idiot ; we couldn't make him understand a thing, and somebody had to watch him all the time to prevent

his betraying our whereabouts. His one cry day and night was for water; he 'wanted to be clean again before he died,' and he used to go from one to the other all day long crying because we would not take him where he could wash his hands. Poor fellow! I knew him very well, he was a lieutenant in my company, and such a nice boy when he joined the regiment."

"What became of him?"

"Oh, we got him through safely enough, but I saw his sister the year after, in Washington, and she told me he had died at home. There, for Heaven's sake don't ask me to tell you any more! I never speak of that time if I can possibly help it. It sounds absurd, I admit, but I'm so awfully afraid of dreaming about it at night," Arthur answered, a troubled look in his face as though the horror of the old time was pressing back upon him. "Let us speak of something else. About those songs — what is it you were saying, Miss Hamlyn?"

"Only that I wanted to know what they were about," said Bell abruptly.

She slipped down from her seat in the niche and walked off a few paces by herself with some slight pretence of interest in the river's flow. Livingston's story had thrilled through her with a sudden passion of pity and love. From that moment, by some curious reasoning process of her own, Miss Hamlyn felt perfectly justified in the feeling for which she had hitherto reproached herself. The thought of his past suffering hurt her with actual pain, and yet she listened to it eagerly, 'loving him for the perils he had passed,' and glorying in the fact she loved him. After that day Bell never made the slightest effort to shape or control events. Her love had reached a point in which it was utterly self-satisfying. It might be right, it might be wrong — she never asked herself the question now. The new feeling which had taken possession of her heart had filled it utterly; there was no room for doubt or question more. She knew that Arthur did not love

her, and the knowledge hardly troubled the despairing quiet of her soul. She asked for nothing more under heaven but to fill the present hour with her love and forget the inevitable coming of the morrow.

"I thought you might try them some time, you know," Arthur was saying to Gerty as Bell came back to her seat a moment later; "of course you would have to give up the chorus part, unless Blake feels as though he could educate his voice to the pitch of giving that howl with which they finish? I fancy Tom and I might be taught to do that by the way. Anyhow, I copied a lot of words out for you at a venture, and here they are," taking a folded paper out of his pocket-book as he spoke.

"But will the English words do to sing?"

"Well, I don't know; they are literal translations, Lane says. Perhaps we might polish them up for you a little, and make them more flowing. Here, Blake, catch hold of this and read it aloud, will you?"

"Pass it over then," said Blake, reaching across. "They are love songs I suppose?"

"Read it and see."

"O tear of mine eye, who drew thee forth over my cheek?
It saith: "Thy desire increaseth because of thy true love's
absence."

Have mercy upon one enslaved, O Beautiful, and intent upon
thee.

Blinded be the eyes of him who loves thee not, O dark-com-
plexioned —

Dark-complexioned and with two white roses!
My love hath perfumed herself on the nights of the festival,

I vow that, if my mistress comes to me,
I will do deeds that 'Antar did not!'"

"Who is 'Antar?'" asked Kate.

"The hero of all the popular Arabic songs. There is a sort of chant or epic poem about him which runs through several volumes. The story-tellers you have seen in the Cairene cafés are always singing and telling

parts of his adventures. How do you like the words, Miss Campbell?"

"Very much. We will try them together to-night, Captain Blake, and give these other people a séance when we feel sure of ourselves."

"All right—but here is another one," said Blake. "Listen.

"A lover says to the dove: "Lend me your wings for a day." The dove replied: "Thy affair is vain."—I said: "Some other day, That I may soar through the sky and see the face of the Beloved,— I shall obtain love enough for a year and will return, O dove! in a day!""

"That sounds like a bit out of Heine."

As they sat there talking the afternoon had passed away, already the sun was sinking, round and dazzling, behind a violet-colored mountain of stone.

"Don't you think we ought to climb up there?" asked Kate, pointing to where the highest point of the great propylon shone golden against the blue; "'Murray' always recommends ascending the greatest height, so as to get a good bird's-eye view of any ruin."

"There is—thank Heaven!—but one 'Murray,' and, Kate, you are his prophet," said Bell gayly. "Come on, Gerty; let us try it any way. There must be some small proportion of staircase left, I suppose?"

"You had much better let one of us go first," suggested Blake; "there are ghosts enough about the old place already, I imagine, without your breaking your necks on the stairs and adding to their number."

On one side of the temple they soon discovered a narrow stairway, made in the thickness of the wall, which led with many a twist and turn to a small upper court behind the propylon nearest the river. Two or three small dark chambers opened out on this terrace; on one side of it, against the wall, the fragments of some broken steps gave sufficient foothold for the farther ascent to the temple roof, where another short flight of

stairs brought them out on the very top of the great pylon. Four huge blocks of stone, laid lengthways in a hollow square, surrounded the opening where these last stairs ended.

“Take care, Miss Hamlyn,” said Blake, as Bell stepped out on one of these blocks and walked to its opposite end, “that isn’t an over and above safe place unless you are very sure of the steadiness of your head. Falling from here would be no joke, I can tell you !”

“I don’t believe I could fall if I tried to, Captain Blake ; I feel like a bird — as though I could fly away off into those farthest depths of blue. Isn’t it delicious ? Give me your hand, Gerty, and come ; but look out for your hat, for the wind is blowing hard up here.”

The view from that height was wonderfully lovely. On either side high walls of overhanging rock shut in the river, standing in jealous guardianship around the sacred isle. Beneath their frowning blackness lapsed and flowed a wide shining expanse of water, stained crimson with the sunset’s glare ; beneath them a line of tall and plump palms were bending in the wind ; to the east the Lybian sands poured in a golden stream through every cleft and fissure in the darkling hills, and over their heads and all about them floated a splendor of reddening fire.

From their station on the pylon’s top they seemed to look straight into the very heart of the sunset, where all the west had burst into sudden flames of fire. The freshening wind blew to them in uncertain rise and fall the melancholy sound of the distant cataract, and now and then the cry of some night-bird cut sharply through the stillness of the hour. An immense sense of loneliness brooded over the empty temples and the silent island, abandoned by their forgotten gods whose sculptured faces mournfully gazed out from the crumbling walls, flushed by the serene splendor of the dying day.

“I think Kate is right ; it is blowing much too hard to be comfortable up here,” said Gerty, after a moment’s silence ; “Mr. Livingston, — Captain Blake, — which of

you is going to be kind enough to help me down that broken staircase again?"

She looked at Arthur as she spoke, but it was Blake who sprang to his feet.

"I'll go with you;—let me go;—I don't care to stay up here either."

"Come on then."—Was there just a shade of annoyance in her voice?

Miss Campbell was a clever girl in a certain way: "Be bored! Feel neglected in society!—I don't know what the word means," she had said, summing up the wisdom of her life to Bell one day. "Any one—the stupidest man in the world—can amuse you if, while you are with him, you are thinking only of him and not of some one else. Never let a preference for some one who is absent interfere with your present amusement; it's bad philosophy. 'Half a loaf'—why I'd accept a quarter,—the hundredth part,—a crumb of bread in the way of excitement rather than be hungry because I couldn't have the whole. Persuade *yourself* that you like the people you happen to be among; that's the main point. It's so much nicer in every way; so much pleasanter for every one. And afterwards,—My dear, it has become the fashion for you all to be very mythological in your remarks. The only bit of mythology *I* ever could remember was something about the waters of Lethe."

"Gerty wanted you, not Captain Blake. Why didn't you go with her, Mr. Livingston?" asked Bell mischievously as soon as the other two had clambered down out of sight.

"Well, I wanted to stay with you, for one thing. And besides, I always do what you ask me to, and you told me to stay."

"I never even said a word."

"Words are a superfluity half the time," said Arthur lazily, leaning back against the stone, and turning so as to face his companion with the greatest amount of comfort for himself; "I happened to be looking at you

when Miss Campbell spoke, and — well, the first time you came down to table d'hôte at Cairo we all examined you, as in duty bound, and criticised you after dinner, and Mrs. Meredith pronounced that you have what she calls 'speaking eyes.' "

"How long ago all that seems now! I used to detest you in those days, by the way," said Bell, laughing.

"You might, I should think, have the civility to add that your sentiments on the subject have changed since then."

She smiled consciously, and her cheek flushed a little as she answered: "My sentiments are always changing of late. It must be there is some modifying force in this Egyptian air. Once upon a time I was noted for my obstinate belief in the strength of my own convictions. Now, I've entirely forgotten what it is to be of the same mind about any thing for three days running."

"Consistency, thy name is woman! Do you know, I always thought it was rather unkind of you to have such an aversion to me in Cairo. Now, I did not dislike you at all; quite the contrary. Your conversations across the table with your neighbors used to be one of my chief amusements at dinner. I never hear you talking quite in the same vein now; — how is it? Are we not, any of us, capable of inspiring you?"

"Mr. Livingston, if you had a horribly indefinite recollection of having been very absurd some time ago, how would you feel towards the person who reminded you of it?"

"Ah, but I'm not of a resentful disposition, remember! I don't even object to being compared to a *carafe frapée* once in a while."

"Oh, but I never said that! How could Flossy have told you? Oh, Mr. Livingston, I'm so sorry that —"

"That you never said it? Why, so am I! I thought it was rather a good comparison myself; — 'sham ice,' you know, 'with all of the frigidity and none of the —' What was the rest of it? I forgot."

"I'm very — I'm extremely angry at Flossy!" said

Bell indignantly ; " and I don't think it is quite fair of you, Mr. Livingston, to remember what was never never meant for you to hear."

" And yet that was the very thing which made me want to make your acquaintance, Miss Hamlyn. Yes, you may look as incredulous as you please, but it's a positive fact. Talking by an open window is always dangerous, but it means certain discovery on the Nile. I remember it quite well ; I was on the bank about twenty feet off from you when you spoke. Mr. Hamlyn had just invited me to dinner and I had just begun to decline — I was in a very savage mood that day, and the mere thought of dining with ladies to whom I would have to be attentive filled me with horror — when I had the pleasure of overhearing the most outrageous criticism on my character enunciated in a very clear and very sweet voice. I went on board the *Princess* for the first time merely for the pleasure of talking to the young lady who considered me to be ' the most commonplace of creatures, only distinguished by some little extra affectation of frigidity.' There ! I feel better now that my confession is made. It has been weighing on my conscience for the last month or more."

" But how could I have said it ? " asked poor Bell ; " I am so extremely sorry about it I don't know what — "

" I shall be sorry I told you if you take it in that fashion. For my part, I thought you displayed a remarkable gift for analysis of character. No ! don't move ! — please don't. You can't possibly get to the stairs unless I make room for you to pass, which I haven't the slightest intention of doing at present ; and it makes me horribly nervous to see you standing so near the edge. Do sit down again. It's the greatest fun in the world to tease you into getting angry, Miss Hamlyn. Your cheeks flush and you look at me with a lofty and magnificent scorn which is calculated to crush one to the ground. But, as I told you before, I'm not resentful. I like being crushed. Won't you

sit down? Thanks! Now what shall we talk about? can you think of any thing nice and impersonal? The weather for instance. Have you any new opinion about the weather? I always think it a delicate attention on the part of Providence not to have civilized Egypt. Imagine making a morning call in a country where the weather hasn't changed once since the days of Pharaoh!"

"The Merediths have got a head-wind to-day. I wonder how far down they are," said Bell vaguely, looking away at the winding reach of river. "Don't you miss them very much?"

"Do you like compliments, Miss Hamlyn? I hope you do, for I see my way clearly to making you such a very pretty answer to that question."

Bell looked up at him with a laugh. "How very 'nice and impersonal' you are!—and so consistent! Seriously though, I do miss the Merediths more than I thought I should. I like Mrs. Meredith; she is so thoroughly satisfactory in every way."

"Mrs. Meredith has a great deal of character," said Arthur thoughtfully;—"you don't mind my cigar? Thanks.—I knew her well even before she married Fred, and, take her all together, I should say she had the most steadfast nature of any woman I have ever met. She is perhaps rather what you would call 'chilly' in her manner," he went on, smiling maliciously. "Some people think her over-reserved. In reality she is as simple as a child. One of the very rare women a man could have for his friend; the fact makes her less feminine perhaps."

"I don't see why. Any woman who amounts to any thing has the capacity for friendship in her."

"You think so now. It's a subject on which people are apt to change their opinions after a while. At your age—I'm about a hundred years older than you, remember—you are quite right to believe in the eternity of all grand sentiments, including your devoted friendship to Miss Campbell."

"Gerty! well—I don't know," said Bell, hesitating; "I was always fond of Gerty; and she liked me too, once. Somehow we never seem to look at things in the same way any more; I don't know why."

"Miss Campbell can be very engaging when she chooses. She has the most surprising facility of emotion I ever saw. That is her charm. She really means all the nice things she says—while she is saying them. I can't imagine anybody being seriously angry with Miss Campbell for any thing she might choose to do; it would be about as logical as objecting to a chameleon because he changed his color with the shifting of circumstance."

"Happy girl! I envy her," said Bell, with a sigh.

"It certainly is an excuse that never will be made for you, Bell. You belong—another 'impersonality,' you understand—to the responsible class of mankind, the people who contrive to impress one with the idea that they know the value of their own acts. I advise you never to indulge in any particular wickedness, you would so infallibly be held to account for it afterwards."

The changing western lights had flared and flamed into one splendid mass of fire; a great glory of color filled the air and burned and glowed along the river's length. North, south, and east the splendor rose and fell; on the pylon's top they seemed floating in a very sea of light; wrapped in delicate flames of softest rose-red fire.

As they sit there in silence watching the changing sky, deep purple edges begin to dim the glory of the clouds. The warm red light has suddenly fallen from off the temple walls; within the last few minutes the wan pale look of gray old age has settled on the lonely ruins. As the sunset fades away the wind freshens and blows more steadily, tearing apart the clouds and seeming to exult in the havoc it works amidst the tumultuous beauty of the sky.

Bell puts out her hand and grasps the farthest edge

of the block of granite on which she sits. In the rising wind the great stone archway seems to waver and tremble like the tossing palms below.

"What are you thinking of, Bell?" asks Arthur suddenly, struck by the absent look which has stolen across her face.

"I could not possibly tell you."

"Not if I insist upon knowing it?"

"Not even then."

"It puzzles me to guess who you could have been thinking of. You had such a strange expression," he persists.

"You are very curious, Mr. Livingston."

"Curious? why of course I'm curious! Gratified curiosity, of one kind or another, is the sensation I value the most in life. It's all very well for you novices to affect to despise curiosity, we veterans know better. You are still in the stage of existence in which no one is so interesting as one's self. After a while you will get tired of that. But by a kind forethought of Providence the curtain that drops over one's own drama of life is always rising for our neighbors' little comedies, and a retired actor makes a capital critic, you know."

"I wonder sometimes how much you really mean of what you say, Mr. Livingston?"

"Very nearly every thing — when I'm talking to you."

"But do you mean then that you are really in the habit of dissecting the character of your friends, in that fashion, for your private amusement? It is a dreadful idea. If I think of it much longer I shall begin to feel like a fly under a microscope."

"Sooner than reduce you to that, I'll promise to abandon all study of your character," Arthur says, laughing. "Henceforth I promise only to think of you as of one of the inscrutable — and delightful — mysteries of nature. But you are all wrong about moral vivisection. 'The proper study of mankind is man,' don't you know? Only, to do it justice, I advise

you to study him in the abstract. Individually I'm afraid you would find him apt to distract your attention. It takes not only time but experience to reach the philosophic heights I flatter myself I have attained."

"That is precisely what I was thinking a moment ago," says Bell thoughtfully; "I was wondering — Mr. Livingston, were you ever very much in love with any one?"

But Mr. Livingston does not answer.

Up there, among the clouds, in the midst of that wonderful hush and glow, they seemed lifted so far above the ordinary formulas of life that she had asked him the question in all simplicity. Now, his expressive silence sends the hot blood rushing to her cheeks. She turns to him impulsively, a half apology upon her lips —

"By the way, did you read that account of the chamber of Osiris down on the temple roof beneath us?" asks Arthur quietly; "it is very interesting I can assure you. The Forty-two —"

"Mr. Livingston, I beg your pardon. I can — I mean, I had no intention of intruding upon your private affairs," says Bell confusedly.

"My private affairs! My dear Miss Hamlyn! you did not understand me. I was speaking of the Forty-two Assessors, don't you know? Here, they are represented as carrying emblems of —"

"Would you be kind enough to let me pass, Mr. Livingston?"

"— emblems relating to — Good God! what are you doing? Are you hurt, Bell? Did I hurt you? Do answer me! No, don't be frightened; — it's all right now. Here, sit down on those steps; — not there — farther down, where you can't see over the edge."

He does not let go of her until she is seated half way down the narrow stairs. Then he takes his arm away and, still holding her hand, says anxiously, "You are not hurt, Bell? You're sure you are not hurt? Do you feel faint? Will you wait for me here while I run down and fetch you some water?"

molten gold. On the farther shore the mimosa-trees are of a pallid grayish tone, the young wheat at their feet still telling as vivid green in the reflected light. The moon rises while the afterglow is still brilliant. They see it lifting large and white above a dusky violet sea, high over the top of the shadowy Lybian range.

No words can render the ineffable charm and softness of the air ;—the depth and purity of tone ; the exquisite, intense delicacy of color. Peace and stillness fall upon them like a benediction out of heaven.

The sky becomes ashes of roses, with only here and there some lingering gleam of light ; the water deepens, darkens ;—high above the waving palms, floating in a tremulous atmosphere of pale blue light, rises the evening star, and their hearts bow down in worship before the visible presence of the serene and smiling Athor—Our Lady of the West.

CHAPTER XIII.

“IN THE HOLLOW LOTUS-LAND.”

EVERY morning for the last ten days a light north wind has filled the sails of the two dahabeahs, wafting them farther south. Every afternoon a dead calm has fallen on the river, leaving them stranded along the bank, now moored in the shadow by a grove of thin thorny mimosa-trees ; now stopping by some nameless Nubian village ; once or twice stuck hard and fast upon some shelving sandbank near the shore.

“It is one very good year, believe me,” Ibrahim says half a dozen times a day, laying down the long flexible stem of his nargileh, and marking with his finger the place where he stopped reading. The “Arabian Nights,” in the original, and his account-

book with Mr. Hamlyn are the only volumes Ibrahim ever opens ; the contents of the first evidently affecting the statements of the latter. "One very good season. Wind not blow much but blow every day, and nice warm sun. You not call this good weather ? Two years ago I come up with one gentleman, the south wind blow every day for twenty days. We stay six weeks in Nubia ; so cold the sailors not work ; sleep all day long. The gentleman he sit in the saloon in his overcoat, never go out, never go on deck. When we get back to Cairo, he refuse to pay me more than half. He say I'm no good dragoman ; not tell him beforehand ; not know the weather of my own country. I tell him : You English gentleman, sir ! you Christian, read your Bible, and not know that God made the weather before He made the dragomen ?" The recollection of his triumph makes him laugh. At the third or fourth repetition of the story he gets excited and goes out and bullies the cook.

The only narrow thing in Nubia is the country itself. A vaster sky than that of Egypt bends over the long limitless plains of undulating sand, and the widening Nile stretches like a waveless sea from farthest shore to shore. Sometimes the limestone cliffs recede, lower, disappear ; then at a sudden turn come crowding back again to the water's edge, barely leaving room enough for the narrow strip of green, not six feet wide in places, which forms the land of Nubia.

The very distance between the villages — whose houses are the merest mud-huts now, built in a single room — has perceptibly increased ; now the different settlements for the most part lie a good day's journey apart. The scenery too has changed. The thick short *dôm* palm, whose stubby plume-like branches start almost from the ground, has to a great extent supplanted the slender tree of Egypt.

The landscape is beautiful, mournful, monotonous. For days and days they see nothing but the long long

stretch of shining river, and the long long reach of silent desert ; with here and there upon the bank some thick-set grove of castor-oil trees; fifteen or twenty feet in height. The castor-oil plant grows in great clumps, directly out of the yellow sand, looking with its dark bluish-green leaves like the exaggeration of some monstrous peony. The leaf is very large, sharply indented at the edge ; the flower is like the pale green blossom of the grape, and the fruit, when ripe, the color of a purple plum covered with bluish bloom and sharp with reddish spines like those of a gooseberry. The thick fleshy stems and even the faded leaves are of the same light steely blue.

In leaving Egypt they have left the multitudes of wild water birds behind them. It is only at rare intervals now that a snowy-winged ibis passes along the shore. At sunset there are no heavy-flighted pelicans to stand like sentinels along the river banks ; flocks of wild pigeons still circle about each village, and now and then a tufted hoopoo comes falling through the trees in answer to the dragoman's shot, but that is all.

Sometimes of late they have surprised some long lazy crocodile, lying like a stranded log across a sunny sandpit in mid stream ;— a huge still monster who suddenly rolls over and drops without a splash into the deepest water the moment before the dahabeah comes within gunshot of his lair. Now and then, until the moonlight waned, shooting parties have left the boats far into the small hours of the night, breathing threats of direst vengeance against the many jackals whose yelping cry is never silent about the outskirts of the villages, but as yet no victim has rewarded their efforts.

It is an idle, languid, dreamy life that they are leading now ; the spell of the land has fallen upon them. Hurry, the need of excitement, thought even, seem to belong to some other stage of existence than this, where life means merely floating between the river and

the sky,—drifting day by day farther and farther into the heart of silent Africa.

In Egypt all the fields are divided by narrow drains into the squares of a chequer board. At every few hundred feet along the bank rises the tall pole of a *shadoof*, or watering machine, where all day long, at the water's edge, one half-naked fellah fills the leatheren bucket in the river, and another bronze-like figure, at the top of the bank, pours it into the trough that irrigates the field.

These shadoofs are very picturesque, coming up in fine relief against the sky, but in Nubia they have entirely disappeared and are replaced by the large round *sakiah* wheels, to whose revolving spokes are fastened a multitude of earthen jars which fill themselves in the river and slowly turn round until they spill their contents into the wooden reservoir. These wheels are turned by oxen; behind them is slung a shallow basket where sits or sleeps the drowsy *sakiah* boy; and higher up the river, strips of ragged grass matting roof in each round enclosure from the burning African sun. For these wheels are never still. Their slow shrill creak for ever pierces the heavy heat of the Nubian noon or raises its mournful voice in dull complaint beneath the silent stars. It is a melancholy cry, — half a groan and half a wail, — the cry of the over-worked. All day and all night the tired oxen plod wearily on, their driver following in the never-ended round with all the apathy of utter hopelessness, and still that long-drawn plaintive cry is the only protest that rises shrilly through the tender peaceful twilights, telling its old old story of oppression, of bondage, of centuries of mutely suffered wrong. It is the voice of “the old woe o' the world,” — the inarticulate lament of the weak and the unhappy.

Life on board the *Princess* was going on quietly enough. Mr. Hamlyn was ill. That, for the moment, seemed the only drawback to their perfect pleasure. A sort of low fever had been hanging about him ever

since they left Thebes, now he was really very unwell. Mrs. Hamlyn had become alarmed ; it was only thanks to his own tenacity of purpose that the *Princess* had not long ago folded her wings and dropped down the river again. But the quiet dogged determination which had made his success as a man of business had not abandoned Mr. Hamlyn in his newer search for enjoyment. From his daughter's society, to the knowledge of a new book or the beauty of a sunset, Mr. Hamlyn was intent upon extorting every atom of pleasure that the thing contained. No accident, no new turn of affairs was allowed to affect his plans for utter and complete gratification. His craving for new interests, for a wider horizon in his mental life, was almost painful in its intensity. "Does the man ever really enjoy himself?" Livingston wondered sometimes, watching the reticent cadaverous face of his host ; "is there any thing in heaven or earth capable of moving him to sympathy with any one else's pleasure or pain? By Jove! the more I see of him the better I understand why Bell is so mortally afraid of contradicting her respected father"—a reflection the more ungrateful on Mr. Livingston's part inasmuch as he had become a great favorite with Mr. Hamlyn.

A thoroughly cultivated man who made the gratification of his aesthetic tastes the leading motive of his life ; an American, without an ostensible occupation and calmly indifferent to the fact, being neither ashamed nor conscious of his idleness, was a natural phenomenon which had never come in the way of his observation before. All his innate passion for the luxurious and easy side of life was stirred with surprise, admiration, and a vague sense of retrospective envy at the sight. For Livingston symbolized to Mr. Hamlyn the youth he would most have liked to have had.

"It's a curious piece of injustice after all," he said to Arthur rather bitterly one day ; "you men who waste your lives have the luck to know how to enjoy them, while we, the workers, are more like broken-down

machines than men the moment we lay down our work. I'd give fifty thousand dollars to look at a picture or a cathedral with your eyes."

And once, after a long silence, "You are not as happy a man as I should be in your place, Livingston," he said, "if I were your age now, with all your advantages, I'd distinguish myself within the next five years."

"What for?"

"Why—why because everybody does who can. Men with half your talent have made a name for themselves in the world before this."

"You are very kind to say so. But I am philosopher enough to think that if my neighbor's laurels grow high and strong they shade me just as well as though they were my own; and if they don't,—laurel wreaths are not a becoming head-gear for men of my temperament I fancy."

"The fact is, you are lost for want of some motive in life. Why don't you get married, Livingston?"

Arthur laughed. "*Et tu, Brute!* It is about ten years since I ever contemplated putting such a violent end to my very harmless and placid career, Mr. Hamlyn. Lately I'm beginning to feel uneasy about the subject. Fred Meredith, yourself, Miss—other people, I mean, have absolutely talked me into feeling once more like an eligible *parti*. It's a light in which I find it difficult to recognize myself, I assure you."

The other man raised his head from the sofa and looked hard at him for a moment.

"You wouldn't make a bad sort of husband, though," he said drily; "would you mind telling the servant to call Bell? It is time for me to take another dose of my medicine I believe."

A certain unusual hilarity seemed prevalent on board the *Cleopatra* that afternoon. A confused sound of voices and laughter excited Miss Hamlyn's curiosity some minutes before she reached the boat; as she crossed the plank to the lower deck a shout of welcome greeted her arrival, but the first face she saw bore

rather an aggrieved expression. In fact Miss Horton was conscious of feeling extremely ill-used. Was there any thing to laugh at — any thing a sensible person would laugh at — in the fact that the lotus is an extinct plant in Egypt? she appealed to Miss Hamlyn eagerly. And yet Tom and Mr. Livingston —

“I foresee that in mere self-defence we shall have to explain ourselves, Arthur.”

“Tom! if you tell that story I shall go downstairs!”

“Do, dear; and — I say, Gerty! — bring me up my cigar-case as you come back? You will find it in the breast pocket of my other coat. How are you off for cigars now, Livingston? Blake’s and mine are running so low we think of —”

“But the story. Let us have the story first, Mr. Campbell.”

“Ah, yes, — the story. Well, to begin at the beginning, you must know that Gerty was seized this morning with a sudden desire to go out and sketch. It appears she has promised a portrait of a Nubian woman, taken on the spot, by herself, to a certain Sir Frederick Somers, whom you have probably heard the girls talk about often enough, Miss Hamlyn; as Somers is the ‘great man’ of our part of the county. A capital fellow, very good rider, goes in for hunting and all that sort of thing, and, added to all his other virtues, a great friend of mine. He came up to Oxford the last year I was there —”

“Oxford! why, I had understood that Sir Frederick was rather an elderly person,” said Blake; “Miss Campbell spoke of him as her ‘very old friend’ in such a way I was under the impression —”

“That he was in an advanced state of decrepitude,” interrupted Tom, with a peculiar smile. “Gerty’s friends as a general rule are not especially noted for extreme old age. Somers is about six and twenty, I should think. However, all this is not to the point. To go back to my story then: — Gerty recollecting her sketch, Blake — thinking, as we now discover, to assist in cheering the last moments of an ‘elderly person’ — gallantly offers

to accompany her on shore, and give her a lesson in water colors. For that purpose they start off together immediately after lunch. A couple of hours later Livingston and I conclude we might as well take a constitutional until the men are ready to track again ; so we stroll off, talking of one thing and another, without paying much attention to where we go, until — finding a nice shady place under a castor-oil tree — we lie down on the sand to smoke, and instantly fell asleep."

" Speak for yourself, Tom. *I* was only meditating."

" Oh, call it what you like," said Campbell ; " at all events, the first thing I was conscious of, was a voice talking through my dreams, and saying in the most sentimental tone : —

'Branches she bore of that enchanted stem,
Laden with fruit and flower, whereof she gave
To each —

oh, is this not the perfection of happiness to be lotus-eating with *you* ?' By Jove ! thought I, what's going on over there ? I was so sleepy and startled it never occurred to me to make a noise. I lay still and waited :

'They sat them down upon the yellow sand,
Between the sun and moon, upon the shore.'

the voice went on, quoting, I am bound to say, with a great deal of expression — "

" I'm beginning to forgive you, Campbell, go on — and be quick."

" From where I lay I could look through an opening in the trees and see one of those horrible native women, with a child sitting astride on one shoulder ; with a plug of wood through her lips and a ring in her nose ; three blue tattoo marks on her chin and forehead ; — the regular thing, in short, only a little uglier than usual. With one hand she drew her blue cotton cloak before her mouth, and with the other she was holding out a bunch of small green fruit ; evidently something she was offering for sale to some unseen howadji. Why, Livingston, said I, by Jove ! I believe that is Blake !

'Blake!' says Arthur, 'why of course it's Blake! Who but Blake would ever think of taking a "spoon" among so much castor-oil? He is talking to himself, rehearsing something, perhaps. Let's hear what he will say next?' So we still keep quiet, and presently—"

Well, and wasn't that story finished yet? Miss Campbell demanded from the lower step. And what kind of proportion had they kept up between their fact and fiction? Did Captain Blake find it easy to recognize the origin of their legend, she wondered.

"To keep up the character they are giving me, I ought to answer you by saying that Tom is making it into 'a tale of little meaning, though the words are strong,'" said Blake, laughing; "as for finishing it! — If he gets through it by to-morrow morning at the rate he is going on we will all have reason to be thankful."

"Be patient, Blake; for, 'What is it that will last?'"

"Your story will, for one thing — judging from appearances."

"You are a very ungrateful set of people," said Campbell calmly; "but never mind,

"Time driveth onward fast,
And in a little while my lips are dumb"—

Livingston, you have the floor now. Put them out of misery as quickly as you can."

"All right," said Arthur; "I'll do my best. The next thing was, we saw Blake reach over and pick off two or three of those queer things from the bunch. 'How glad I am those other fellows are not here,' he goes on, soliloquizing; 'they are so full of chaff, so unsympathetic; they've got no poetry, no real sentiment in them.'

"Let us swear an oath, and keep it with an equal mind,
In the hollow Lotus-land to live and—"

'You may say what you like,' answers another voice very deliberately, 'I think the taste of that lotus is simply nasty! — Now it is one of my strongest principles

never, under any circumstances, to disturb a *tête à tête*, so the moment I recognized Miss Campbell's voice, and saw that Blake was not alone, I nudged Tom on the shoulder to come along ; but, of course, with his usual felicity of action, he caught his foot in a branch of that prickly mimosa — ”

“ And came a regular cropper over the hedge, in the very midst of the interesting group, like a fallen angel intruding on Paradise ! The natives shrieked and fled ; the sailors rushed at me with their staves ; Gerty hummed a tune, and Blake offered to show me his sketch upside down.”

“ Yes,” added Gerty, laughing, “ and Mr. Livingston came quietly walking in through the gap Tom had made, and went up to Captain Blake with a perfectly serious face — ‘ Look here, Blake,’ said he, ‘ it may be all very well for you to do that sort of thing by yourself if you have any particular weakness for the plant, but the next time you invite a young lady to go “ lotus-eating ” with you, I advise you as a friend to offer her something better than green castor-oil beans ! ’ Just fancy, Bell, that horrid woman having brought us castor-oil to eat ! ”

“ I must say, I thought they were rather bad myself,” admitted Blake ; “ but then I supposed it was an Egyptian taste, and you might learn to eat lotus as you do olives — by practice.”

“ What do you suppose possessed her to offer them to you ? ” asked Kate Horton seriously.

“ Oh, the natives listened to Blake's conversation, jumped at the conclusion that he was slightly deranged in his head, and attempted to ‘ minister to a mind diseased,’ ” said Arthur, laughing.

Blake had risen from his seat, and was sauntering about the deck, whistling softly to himself.

“ Have you seen our chameleon yet, Miss Hamlyn ? ” he asked, coming up to Bell with a small box in his hand ; “ we bought him yesterday. Queer little beast, isn't he ? ”

The chameleon was an ugly little lizard of a vivid green color. A most secretive looking animal, with a mouth like the slit made by a sharp penknife, that could hardly be seen when shut, and prominent stony eyes with wrinkled eyelids, and the tired expression of a very old person with no particular interest in life.

"Camels, pelicans, and chameleons all look to be like creatures of another world who neglected to die when their contemporaries disappeared and have been regretting the oversight ever since," remarked Bell.

"But did you ever notice what beautiful eyes those hideous camels have?" asked Arthur. "If ever I wanted to pay a woman a compliment I should tell her she had the eyes of a camel. They — camels, not women, I mean — have a dark, liquid, appealing glance which claims your pity. They seem looking at you wistfully to discover if you are conscious of their lack of beauty. When an old camel in the street twists his long neck around and looks after me in that fashion I always feel like going up to him and saying, 'Cheer up, old boy! we understand all about it; we know it isn't your fault.'"

"There! now he is turning brown again," said Gerty, touching the chameleon with the tip of her finger; "that is because he is on your blue dress, Bell. We tried him yesterday with all sorts of colors, but bright green is the only one that he takes prettily; the others are all dark and dingy."

"He's a disappointing little beast, and not at all what my fancy painted him," said Tom. "Why, if there isn't the governor on the bank! Where is he coming from, I wonder?"

"I think Mr. Campbell has been persuading papa to try his homœopathic medicine. I see he has his box with him."

"Well, young people, and how are you all getting on?" said Mr. Campbell, coming up the steps flourishing his stick; "all right, eh? You don't feel as though you ought to take a little something any of you? — just

as a precaution against the climate, you know, I've just come from calling on your good father, Miss Bell ; a little feverish certainly — a little feverish — but we will bring him round all right. Ah, Mr. Livingston ! are you there ? The very man I want to see. Mr. Hamlyn has decided on stopping at Aboo Simbel and not going up to the Second Cataract at all. There are forty miles of river with nothing to be seen between the two places, and, although we may do it in a day with the wind, we might be a week getting up to Wady Halfeh. So Hamlyn has settled to stop to-morrow. He does not feel strong enough to risk the lengthening of the journey much."

"Yes, I know. Mr. Hamlyn spoke to me about it this morning," said Arthur quietly.

"Ah, yes ; precisely so. We shall be sorry to part company so soon. If you have any fancy to see the Cataract, Mr. Livingston, I daresay 'Tom there could find room enough for you to go up with us. Very happy to have you, I'm sure, if you can put up with rather narrow accommodations for a day or two."

But Mr. Livingston would do nothing of the kind. It was out of the question that he should allow them to put themselves to so much trouble for his sake ; and besides, Mr. Hamlyn might miss him, he averred gravely.

"It is the clearest case I ever saw," Miss Campbell remarked enigmatically that night in the privacy of her own cabin. "The clearest case of what, Gerty ?" her cousin inquired curiously. But Miss Campbell did not trouble herself to explain.

CHAPTER XIV.

AN OLD STORY.

"Thou in the grave shalt rest : — yet, till the phantoms flee
Which that house and heath and garden made dear to thee
erewhile,

Thy remembrance and repentance and deep musings are not free
From the music of two voices, and the light of one sweet smile."

SHELLEY.

IT is half-past four o'clock in the morning. Miss Hamlyn is in bed, fast asleep and dreaming. She is passing through an endless hall, on either side of which a row of seated stone figures gaze blankly at her as she hurries by, trying to reach the far-off glimmer of light where the long corridor opens out on the day. It seems to Bell that Arthur is waiting for her beyond that light, and she struggles to reach the spot with all the painful intensity of a dream, but her feet are shod with lead, they barely move over the hollow pavement, which sends the sound of each footstep echoing through the long hall. The noise increases, the echoes grow louder and louder ; Miss Hamlyn starts and opens her eyes ; some one is knocking at the state-room door.

"Nearly five o'clock, Miss ; time to get up," says Ibrahim, knocking again.

"All right ! I'm awake. Have we got there ?" asks Bell.

"Yes, Miss ; got there about half-past one. The other boat she go right on ; very good wind now."

"Have you called Mr. Livingston ?"

"Mr. Livingston, he nearly done dressing."

"Tell him I'll be ready in ten minutes."

She lights her swinging lamp and dresses quickly, as yet but half awake. As she finishes twisting up her

hair under her hat Ibrahim comes to the door again. "Mr. Livingston says plenty of time ; you not hurry yourself, Miss ; but very cold morning, you must take thick shawl with you before you go out."

"Very well."

The sky was still dark and blank when Miss Hamlyn came out of her cabin with cautious steps and opened the door of the saloon. A dozen muffled figures lay upon the lower deck, wrapped in their large brown cloaks. Upstairs the coverings had been stripped from the divans and the cushions were heaped in bulky rolls upon the floor.

Miss Hamlyn sat down upon one of the seats, pulled her fur cloak closer about her, and waited for Livingston to appear. The dragoman was going about with a white linen lantern in his hand, the flapping sleeves of his stiff camel's-hair abbas making him look three times his natural size. Presently he brought his lantern upstairs and set it on the floor, giving Bell at the same time a small iron vessel full of thick hot coffee to drink, for the waiter was still fast asleep and the routine of the day not yet begun.

And now the morning sky turned to a pallid gray ; a cold wan light crept over the river and defined the outline of the hills. The late moon was still waning in the west, but overhead the stars had grown dim and faded away. There was something strange and unfamiliar in the chilly stillness of the hour.

For it was very chilly—"Almost cold, by Jove!" Mr. Livingston remarked, coming up the cabin stairs. Had Miss Hamlyn wraps enough? Or was it only this gray light which made her look so pale? Mr. Livingston was not to step upon that bundle of rags—there was Ibrahim's testimony to the effect that the cook was sleeping somewhere inside of it. And he was not to make remarks about Miss Hamlyn's personal appearance. "Because I think it was positively heroic on my part to get up at all," said Bell, laughing and holding out her hand.

" And is there any thing else I am not to do ? "

" Yes ; you are not to start until you have had some coffee ; and you are to be quick. See how light it is getting. When I first came up the moon was quite bright, and now it has faded away to that little white cloud."

" I can see the figures in front of the temple," said Arthur, crossing over to the other side of the deck. " There they are — four seated giants, with a long smooth sweep of sand pouring down like a torrent from far above them to the water's edge. The one highest up the hill is covered to his shoulders, the next one is buried in sand to his waist, but there are the lower two quite uncovered. Don't you see them now ? "

" How glad I am the *Cleopatra* has gone on ! " said Bell ; " Imagine if we had to go up there with Mr. Campbell and Kate and be told how those statues are sixty feet high, — ' No, uncle, sixty-six, with the pedestal,' — Kate would say ; and Heaven knows how many feet round."

" Yes, and how the temple was dedicated to Ra the Sun God, and how the statues are portraits of Rameses II. ; Rameses the Great — ' commonly called Sesostris ' — I can hear Miss Horton saying it now."

The *Princess* was moored in front of the small temple of Athor, whose entrance showed, a square dark hole against the wall of rock. Some of the sailors had used the place to sleep in during the night ; a few smouldering embers, the last vestige of their watchfire, still glowed redly from out the darkness of the temple.

A narrow pathway ran along the bank, skirting the steep sand-drift up whose slippery sides they toiled — the cold heavy sand pouring down upon them at every step — until they sank, breathless and panting, before the entrance of the great temple of Aboo Simbel.

The colossal figures before this entrance were still indistinct in the half light. A hundred feet above.

their heads rose the sheer smooth wall of rock ; before them opened a long wide hall, and still another and another, piercing far into the secret heart of the mountain. On either side of the first hall a long row of gigantic figures loomed faintly, dimly out, as in a dream ; of the two nearest the entrance they could vaguely distinguish the folded arms and bowed head of an Osiride.

It was not yet day, but a wan cold light glimmered along the darkling river and a pale yellow line was creeping across the eastern horizon. Gradually this line widened, deepened ; the lower part of the sky was suffused with pale liquid gold, and the sharp shiver of the dawn ran like a ripple over the pale golden water.

"Shall we go in before the sun rises, Bell ? "

The two sailors who had followed them from the dahabeh drew back and refused to enter.

"The Arabs believe there is an evil spirit, an Afreet, who lives in the heart of the mountain. It has taken possession of the adytum, and any one who sees it is either torn to pieces or made inconceivably happy by the gift of what he longs for most. Our men are awfully afraid of it, and nothing will make them go in before it is broad daylight ; Ibrahim warned me of it beforehand. What do you say ? Shall we go in ? The probabilities are that we shall be torn to pieces, remember."

"Shall we go ? I always envy the people who fall in with Afreets in the 'Arabian Nights,' but — well, it does look horribly black in there ! " said Bell, laughing.

They went in. The first halls still slept in the warm darkness, but at their farther end, in the adytum or Holy of Holies, the first light of the dawn rested on the shattered faces and kissed the poor broken lips of the four contemplar gods, wooing back their old Egyptian smile. A moment more, and a ray of golden sunlight struck the wall behind their heads and stole downward to their folded hands, while all about them

brooded everlasting night. Behind the Osiride columns, in the outer hall, open out on either side a row of dark narrow chambers like vaults, — in all probability the ancient store-rooms of the priests. Bell crossed the main hall, went behind the columns to the door of one of these inner chambers and looked in. It was intensely dark. The air was warm and heavy; the stillness rested like a weight about her; she started at the sound of her own breath; at the tinkle of her earring as she turned her head.

Close beside the doorway was a figure, — a column, — something, — she knew not what, but something vague, whose presence she rather felt than saw. She went in a few steps. The thing became more distinct, and seemed to come nearer. She put out her hand, then drew it sharply back. — What if some other hand were to touch hers in that darkness?

It was impossible not to imagine strange figures peering out of the shadows; — things of the night, — spectres of ancient priests come to adore their God as he took possession of his temple. They were intruders, Miss Hamlyn thought; the first rays of the sun as he enters these walls are not meant for profane eyes to witness. The line of Osirides rise, threatening and terrible in the twilight; all signs of defacement had disappeared, they seemed once more the awful guardians of a solemn faith.

In the chamber behind the great columns Night was still wrapping the temple in her shroud. Miss Hamlyn felt suddenly panic-stricken; afraid to go on, or to move. She hardly dared turn to pass the narrow door, and as she hesitated she fancied there was the sound of some one breathing through the darkness by her side. There was a long long sigh; — the warm close air, that seemed already faint as with the smell of exhausted incense, was stirred with the rush of wings; — or was it the stirring of some flowing robe? Was it a whisper she heard? or but the stifled cry of some strange creature born of the silence and the night?

The first level rays of the sun, reflecting on the sand underfoot, lit up the whole temple with a blaze of yellow light.

For sothe curious reason the stone of the eight Osirides is stained a deep red beneath the surface. One of these figures has been rudely hacked with a chisel in several places, and seems to bleed at each one of these wounds. This gives it a strange look of reality.

Arthur was busy examining the fine decoration of the ceiling when Bell joined him again. A flood of cheerful sunshine filled the main hall ; the sandstone figures glowed like red gold against their shadowy background. There are no openings to the outer air, no door or window in all the temple, save the square hole of the entrance. By seven or eight o'clock the sun has risen high above the hills, and only a pale half light creeps along the carved and sculptured walls of the inner rooms. Later in the day, coming out of the side-chambers, after a long examination of painted and hieroglyph-covered walls, the great figures outside looked white and gleaming like marble to eyes dazzled by the torches' glare.

They are so serene, so passionlessly calm, those grand old giants of Aboo Simbel! Their wide gaze rests upon the sorrows, upon the turbulent pain of men, as it rests on the drifting sand the wind now heaps up in a golden shroud before their very faces, now scatters far and wide, leaving them naked in the presence of their god, the Sun.

Before this temple, in the midst of this boundless waste, man defied Nature long centuries ago. He reared these statues as she builds her everlasting hills, bidding them stand for ever, the proof of his supremacy in the uttermost parts of the earth. Man defied Nature, but his work to-day is hers, not his. She has taken these gods to her very heart of hearts : no rain has ever fallen to undermine their strength : the sun loves them, and visits them before he glorifies the day ; the

still white stars bend down to them in familiar companionship from out the low dark arch of sky ; the Desert has adopted them, spreading its golden sands about their feet ; the very moonlight knows the blessing of their smile.

Something of all this passed through Arthur's mind as he lay stretched out on the sloping sand before the temple, through the long silence of that afternoon. The wide blue river glided past with scarcely a ripple under the wide blue sky. The sunshine stole softly higher up from off the sandhills, leaving them rosy and brown in the shade. Now and then a voice echoed faintly across from the boat, then all was still again ; so still that Bell was not more than half way up the hill before Mr. Livingston heard her footsteps and recognized the rustle of her dress brushing through the soft noiseless sand. He did not speak or look up until she came and stood over him.

"Was I very long ? Papa kept me, and I could not come before. What have you been doing all the afternoon ? Not reading, certainly, for there is your book. I picked it up ever so far below."

"Thanks. No, I have not been reading. I've been thinking, — thinking of old times and of you."

"Of me ?"

"Sit down here, and I will tell you a story, Bell," said Arthur abruptly ; "It is an old story, and a commonplace one, and it all happened ages ago ; still, — I don't know, — I fancy you would care to hear it !"

"Is it — is it about yourself ?" she asked.

"About myself and — another person, some one I loved very dearly once, years and years ago. Do you remember that day on the propylon at Philæ, and how vexed you were at me for not answering your question about myself ? I'm going to answer it now — that is, if you care to hear it."

He got up, looked out in silence at the river for a moment, and then lay down on the sand again, glancing doubtfully across at Bell.

"Let me know if I bore you," he said quietly. "I'll make it as short as I can, but I feel in a curiously sentimental and communicative mood this afternoon. I *want* to talk to you about myself. Shall I begin? Are you ready to listen?"

"Yes."

"I told you it was an old story; you will see how old when you know I was only twenty-two when first I met her. It was down at Meredith's place in the country. She was a sort of cousin and an orphan, and had lived with old Mrs. Meredith until her marriage. Yes,—she was already married when I met her for the first time,—married to a man who—" He drew a long breath and checked himself for a moment. "I have never told this story to any one before," he said at last, speaking slowly and with a curious pause between his words; "I should like to speak of it calmly, and tell you exactly what occurred, if I can. Her husband was not kind to her. Understand me! I don't mean to say he ill-treated her,—not then,—but he neglected her utterly, and she was very beautiful, very young, very lonely. We were thrown together from the first; I spent the summer sketching about the place; Meredith was often away,—this was long before he married,—and she and I were constantly alone. I taught her how to ride. We used to go off on long afternoon excursions through the pine-woods, sometimes a party of us, sometimes only Alice and I. I can shut my eyes now and smell the clean spicy smell of the hemlocks;—I can see the sun slanting through the branches and shining down the long shadowy avenues between the trees;—when I listen I can hear the deep-toned murmur of the wind among the pines—"

His voice faltered and died away. Miss Hamlyn did not speak. He went on again after a moment.

"Well,—I loved her. My God! how I did love her! From the very first I knew that it was hopeless madness, and yet I loved her,—I worshipped her;—where her foot touched the earth was holy ground to

me. I would have died a hundred deaths to save her one moment's suffering, and she— After a while I knew she loved me too. We were three months together, Bell. I was with her, I saw her every day. For three months I lived in a fool's paradise. I was so happy that, looking back now, I can hardly believe it was myself,— and then came the end. One night her husband came down to the farm from New York. What he had heard or what he guessed I never knew. When I saw her the next day I found her sitting in the old orchard, in the yellow sunshine, among the yellowing trees ; she had on a white dress I remember. . . . That was the morning she told me I was never to see her again. I think I went mad then. I told her every thing,— all my mad mad love—my longing—my passion—my wild despair ; and then—I laid my head on her lap and cried like a child. I can't tell you what she was to me that day, Bell ; so loving, so pitiful, so tender, so far above me in her sweet goodness. Well !— I made her promise I should see her once again before I left, and then I came away. I could no more help doing what she told me than I could help loving her.

" I went away to the next town, and there I waited for her letter. It was the end of October ; the autumn was late and warm that year, but that night the weather broke. For ten days I stayed in my room at the country inn doing nothing—waiting. A cold sea-storm had set in ; all day long, as I paced up and down my bare cheerless room, I could hear the dull pour of the rain and the wailing of the wind. I never went out in the daytime for fear of missing her letter, but as it grew dark I would leave the house and spend the night walking about in the storm, wandering for miles among the desolate salt marshes, or standing on the beach hearing the wild dash of the surf on the shore. Sometimes the fog came down heavy and white, so that, from the sands, the moan of the sea sounded muffled and far, and sometimes I would hear strange cries through the

mist, as of some other lost soul calling to mine for help from the outer darkness.

"At last her letter reached me. I went back once more to the old house where we had been so happy. We walked out into the garden for the last time. The sky was heavy and sullen after the storm ; the ground was soaked ; all the flowers bruised and broken by the wind. I remember the look of it all, — even the very swaying of the gaunt blossomless hollyhocks that stood like sentinels along the walk, and seemed to point thin, sodden fingers at us, as we passed them — for the last time together. There, in the summer-house in which we had spent so many happy hours, we said good-by. After I had left her I went back for one more look, one more farewell. She was standing in the same place, quite still, but with a look in her sweet tender eyes I can see yet, — after all these years. I remember I sat down on the bench and laid my hand on the table, and she put her little hand in mine The afternoon had grown dark I could hear the "dull patter of the rain in the leaves overhead"

He seemed to have forgotten that he was speaking aloud. He was looking away across the water.

Miss Hamlyn sat by his side quite motionless. She had not moved or looked up since he began. She was leaning her head upon one hand, staring intently at the ground ; the other hand was unconsciously sifting the fine yellow sand through its fingers, letting it pour back in a smooth continual stream. Long afterward, when all the days of her youth were years away from her, sitting with her husband upon an English beach, it happened that Bell, talking carelessly to some one present, began playing with the sand in the same old fashion. At the touch of the warm dry stream sifting through her fingers she saw again as in a dream the far-off gleaming river ; for her the yellow sunset was shining again behind those distant hills ; through the crash of the music and the murmur of the crowd she could hear — how plainly! — the dear

old voice speaking so gently, so sadly, so fondly, of his dead.

"In those days I meant to become a painter," Livingston went on. "You would hardly believe it now, but I even had some wild dream of distinguishing myself, and making Alice proud of me. So after that I came abroad, and studied art in Paris. For nearly two years I lived there quietly enough. She wrote to me sometimes, — not often — but I lived for months upon each letter. One day I came back from the country, where I had been working for some six weeks, to find one waiting for me in my studio. I had a presentiment of evil before I opened it; it came too soon after the last not to mean trouble. She wrote to me, — Bell, try and think for a moment how I felt when I read it! — she wrote to me to come at once; that man, — her husband, — not content with neglecting her, with treating her as no gentleman could treat a woman, that man, in some fit of rage, had struck her! — struck her, Bell! the woman I loved! — and she was alone without a friend in the world but me! She wanted me; she was ill when she wrote, and she wanted me. And that letter had been lying on my table, unopened, for a month! I left Paris that night. Two weeks after, I landed in New York. I went straight to the Merediths' house in the country, where I knew I should find news of her. I sent up my name; — Mrs. Meredith came in to see me alone. . . . Alice had been dead a fortnight. She never knew, she never *can* know, why I did not come to her in time."

His voice faltered and then broke down. Bell put out her hand and laid it gently upon his. A 'ery passion of pity swept every thought but of him from out her heart.

He went on presently:

"I was very ill myself after that. For weeks I was unconscious of every thing. I cannot tell you how good and patient they all were with me. It was a long while before I was strong enough to walk, the fever

had left me as helpless as a child ; but at last, one day, I left the house and went to see her grave. It is in a quiet country graveyard near the Merediths' house, on the top of a hill that overlooks the valley. We were in December then ; the snow was on the ground. I sat there for a long long time. I was stupefied and weak with the fever, I suppose, for I was not unhappy that day, only dully wretched. I did not realize it yet, but I remember quite well being troubled in a stupid way because it was so cold — and Alice was so delicate, she never could bear the cold. I remember too the look of the sky ; the red wintry sunset and the wide gleaming plain of snow, and how annoyed I was at the dark lines of the fences, and the way they cut up the composition of the landscape. That is the only time I ever went there. It is a small country neighborhood : had I gone back again the people would have talked, they told me ; and Alice had no one but me to watch over her memory now.

“ I was just twenty-four the day I said good-by to love, good-by to hope, good-by to ambition, good-by to all of life except the dull monotonous routine of empty days and a restless empty heart. Ah, well, — all that took place a long long while ago. Do you know why I speak to you of it to-day ? ”

She shook her head.

“ Bell — you are crying, Bell,” he said, bending down, putting his arm about her, and speaking in a voice full of, an infinite tenderness ; “ Why are you crying, child ? Is it because you are sorry ? or is it — because you love me, Bell ? ”

He spoke very gently ; but at his words it seemed to her the river had stopped flowing, the wind was hushed, and the wide silence of the Desert pressed about her, waiting the answer that made or marred her life.

“ Do you love me, Bell ? ”

She raised her head and looked at him a moment. “ O Arthur, how I do love you ! ” she answered passionately.

“ My darling!—But listen, Bell. I think you do love me, child; and it is because I think so I dare offer you so little in return for all you give. They say some men can love two women with equal love. I do not know. What passion I had was burnt out years ago. I have no passion left to give you; but will you take my love? See, dear, how utterly I trust you! I speak to you as I would to myself—I show you my whole heart in all its poverty, and I ask you, Is it worth the having? Will you have it, Bell?”

“ I love you, Arthur!” she said.

“ Don’t love me because you are sorry for what I may have suffered once. What I have been telling you belongs to the past; it is dead, gone—gone for ever. Those years have gone, and my youth has gone; I’ve lived like other men since then. Heaven knows it has not been a life to boast of, Bell! There have been days and years in it when I dared not trust myself to remember what had been; days of madness, of folly, and months of useless apathy. I don’t want to make myself out better than I am; since that day,—ten years ago,—I’ve lived for no one but myself. I have been selfish, cynical, exacting; I doubt if I have ever done any especial good to any one in all my life: but now—now will you teach me how to deserve you better, dear?”

He put his face close down to hers, and looked into her eyes: “ Knowing it all,—remembering it all,—do you love me, Bell?”

“ I love you, Arthur!” she said.

CHAPTER XV.

TWO LOVERS.

"En amour, il y a toujours *un* qui aime *l'autre*. Il était décidé à n'être jamais plus que *l'autre*."

IS unhappiness the invariable result of wrong-doing? Is perfect content any proof of the innocence of one's actions? Does, or does not, the end practically justify the means in the great game of life? Miss Hamlyn had occasion to ask herself these questions more than once in the days following the time she spent at Aboo Simbel.

And was she really doing wrong? she wondered. Could her word still be pledged to George when George himself, her own past life, whatever she had known or felt before she met Arthur, had faded out of her recollection like the idle dream of some night, waning and fading before the coming day? If she still thought of Ferris at times it was with a vague wonder, a question, a doubt. How much of that half-forgotten past was fancy? — how much of it ever existed after all? Could those days that seemed so indistinct, so far away, have ever been the actual living days of her life? Had she ever in sober earnest longed for the sight of George's face, — that face which came back to her now like the confused image of a dream? Had there indeed been a time when she thrilled responsively to each sound of George's voice, — that voice whose very words now cost her an effort to recall? And was a shadow like this to be suffered to stand in silent perpetual warning between her life and happiness?

A chance speech of Mrs. Hamlyn's one day made her remember her indecision, her effort, her struggle with

herself before Livingston joined their dahabeah at As-suan. Good Heavens! how far back it all seemed! How poor and weak and insufficient had been the obstructions to her love! How far off, how unreal, they looked judged by this new standard of her new happiness. For it was impossible to deny that fact. Miss Hamlyn was exceedingly happy; and to those who might object that a broken troth — a forgotten promise — a disavowed past — were but sorry material for such a feeling, I can only object the proverbial fallibility of human nature, and remind them that the work of Nemesis is not the less effective because it is sometimes delayed. And further than that, I can only repeat that it was all wrong, — but it was undeniable. Miss Hamlyn was exceedingly happy. It was perhaps possible that some instinctive foreboding lay hidden beneath the reckless merging of past and future in the present moment. It may be that even then some vague prophetic voice was prompting her to store up memories against the days to come. I cannot pretend to know. But, remembering the bitter commentary of fate upon that life, remembering the fatality of passion, remembering too its expiation in the after-time — I confess that it is only with an effort I find it possible to begrudge Miss Hamlyn those few brief perfect days.

As for Livingston, a touch of almost humorous surprise mingled with all his meditations on the subject of his engagement. He was hardly prepared to regret it, and yet — The sense of having rashly introduced a new and revolutionary element into his well-considered scheme of life was very strong upon Mr. Livingston at times.

For Livingston was essentially a man of habits. At thirty-five he had already passed through many moral crises, had experienced the consequences of many a varying mood, and had ended by forming for himself a serene and uneventful existence — only interrupted at long intervals by fits of unaccountable melancholy. Mr. Livingston had been interesting to many women in the last

ten years, but there was no place made for love in his life, and but few had been strong enough to seek to penetrate the atmosphere of gentle, considerate, unobtrusive selfishness with which he had surrounded himself. It was perhaps only an ignorant and passionate girl like Bell Hamlyn who could have disregarded, and, by so doing, overcome this moderate chilling indifference of experience ; and her one chief charm in Arthur's eyes, the compelling fascination of her presence, was the love she had for him. For Livingston was a man who required love rather than gave it. The tragedy of his youth seemed to have exhausted whatever capacity for intense feeling he once might have had. There was nothing left of it now but a subdued and latent sentiment, and he was capable of caring for a woman only inasmuch as the force of her passion could loosen and awake the dormant springs of his nature. He had liked many women hitherto, but always with a fastidious liking full of reservations, — a sentiment rather than an emotion.

People wondered sometimes why Arthur Livingston had never accomplished any thing ? The answer might have served as the key-note to his character : Livingston had no initiative. Essentially a man of the world, there was nothing formative or compelling in his mind. The influence he undoubtedly exerted upon every one who approached him could only be attributed to the rare charm, — the singularly delicate and distinguished quality of his whole personality. For mentally he was *par excellence* an amateur. He had tastes and opinions, — the one as settled as the others were fluctuating, — but his most intimate friend had never heard him give expression to a belief. It might be the result of a youth spent in uncertain, if not altogether aimless, wandering among the oldest, most enriching art-cities of Europe ; it might be a part of that inevitable indifference to actual contemporary interests which possesses itself of every man living away from his own country ; — for one reason or another there was a certain peculiar tinge

of what, for want of a better word, I will call old-fashionedness which distinguished Livingston's manner ; a deliberate courtesy, a leisurely self-possession, too restrained and finely unobtrusive to excite remark, too potent to pass unrecognized. There was not a trace of self-assertion in his nature, nothing trenchant or aggressive in his manner, and yet, instinctively, one felt he was not a man to brook denial or opposition to his will. Gifted to a singular degree with personal courage, he was accustomed to lead his own life in his own way with but little regard or deference to the opinion of the world. That his proposed marriage with Miss Hamlyn would be considered a *mésalliance* by his own exclusive and fastidious set was an idea which rather amused than troubled him.

"I used to believe I never could care for any one who did not love me a great deal more than I loved him," Bell said that day at Aboo Simbel, "but now—I know it is not true, and I shall not believe you when you say it ; but, oh, Arthur, I wish you would tell me that you do care for me. I wish you would pretend that you did not ask me merely out of pity, — merely because you knew I loved you already."

"You are the first person who ever mistook me for a benevolent and disinterested character, Bell," he answered with an uneasy laugh ; "compassion is not as a general rule my leading virtue, and — Don't talk nonsense, child ! If there was any pity in question it were better bestowed on me than wasted on you. Of the two, *I* am the most deserving object of charity."

"I could not help loving you, you know," she said softly, "and yet—I tried not to."

"So did I. I'm afraid we have both made a failure of it, Bell — my little Bell !" He stopped short, and let fall her hand.

"What is it, Arthur ?" she asked, looking up at him in surprise ; "has any thing happened ? You look as startled as though you had seen a ghost !"

"So I have."

"And what was it like?"

"It was the figure of a man. It was very tall. It had gray hair. It looked at me sharply and said: 'Mr. Livingston, what am I to understand that you have been saying to my daughter?'"

"Oh, is that all?" said Bell laughing; "I fancied—I was afraid—Papa won't say any thing you know. Indeed I think,"—a sudden recollection of her father's words sent the blood rushing to her cheeks as she spoke,—"I think he will be quite pleased when he hears about it."

Livingston smiled. "Confound the man!" he thought. "It is so deuced irritating to play into his hands, and be managed by him in this fashion! I wish to Heaven I didn't know how satisfied he would be at the way I have filled the part he marked out for me!" "What makes you think so, dear?" he said aloud.

"Oh, I don't know," answered Bell vaguely; "perhaps because I can't understand anybody's refusing to be glad just now. I am so happy, Arthur!"

"Poor darling! I wish it were something better worth being happy about," said Mr. Livingston, gently.

The yellow sunset shone and faded away behind the hills. Twilight fell about them; already the stars were shining overhead, and a thread-like crescent of silver floated against a darkling violet sky.

"Look, Bell," said Arthur, "there is the moon. Our new moon that begins with our new life."

They both looked up and watched it for a moment in happy silence. Then Bell spoke:

"Arthur!"

"Well."

"Must you speak to papa about—about me tonight?"

"Would you rather I waited until to-morrow, then?"

"I had rather you waited until—oh, for ever so long—until we reach Thebes again, for instance."

Arthur was silent.

"You see, if you tell him I must tell Flossy, and then

Gerty and everybody will know,— and I had so much rather they did not know it yet. I wish so much that just for a little while you and I might keep our secret to ourselves. It is not as though we thought papa would disapprove, and besides, I have a reason, a particular reason, for asking this."

"What is it, Bell?"

"Must I tell you?" she asked wistfully; "I will if you insist upon it. I'll tell you any thing you really want me to, Arthur; only I wish you would not ask. No, stop! I will not keep any thing a secret from you now. See, dear, there is somebody I know who will be very sorry, I am afraid, when he hears I am going to be—" She hesitated, and hid her face on his shoulder again.

"When he hears you are going to be married, you mean? Well,— and what is it I am to do for 'somebody'? I'm afraid he is in rather a bad way if he depends upon me to help him, you know."

"It is only that I would rather write to him myself than let him hear it from any one else," she said in a very low voice. "I told you about him once, you remember."

Mr. Livingston did not answer. A confused recollection of a confidence made to him long ago, one moonlight night when they had talked on deck together, was puzzling him. "I remember I thought at the time she was speaking of Blake. But it wasn't Blake. And what was it she said? and did she ever tell me the fellow's name?" he wondered. At the time Bell's words had been too indifferent to him to make more than a passing impression; now, rather than confess the past carelessness, he was ready to agree to any thing she might request.

"Very well, dear;" he said slowly. "I don't exactly like the idea, to be quite frank about it; but rather than say no to the first thing you asked me— You are quite sure you do not care in the least for this mysterious somebody?"— with a touch of jealousy in his voice.

"As though, even if I would, I could care for any one but you!"

"So be it then! Until I join the Merediths at Thebes we will keep our secret to ourselves, as you say. That is, you know," he added, laughing, "provided you do not drive me into disclosing it prematurely by flirting with Blake!"

"You had better say, Provided you do not have to caution Gerty when you see me making love to her!" retorted Bell.

The air had grown chill again with the sense of the coming night; only the plain of sand seemed to have retained some of the hot day's sunshine in its folds and still glimmered with a faint uncertain radiance. The four great figures before the temple loomed dimly darkly out; lifting, rising, growing more majestic until the still calm brows seemed to reach the low hanging sky crowned with a shining coronet of stars.

"I am glad to think we shall never come here again," said Miss Hamlyn suddenly. "I am glad to think that this one place will only have known us as we have been to-day—the crowning day of my life, Arthur! When we are far away from Egypt, when we've gone back to real life again, I shall think sometimes how these grand old gods are standing here, keeping their endless watch between the desert and the sky, and it will seem to me as though we had placed our love in their keeping. Come then what may, I shall know they hold for me the recollection of one perfect hour."

"Come what may," he repeated; "what do you fear, Bell, that could come between us now? For you there is life, for me there is the past—but is not love stronger than both?" he said.

For several days the wind had been blowing due north. The *Princess*, stripped of her sails,—her tall mast unshipped and lashed like a beam above the upper deck,—could make but little headway, even with the aid of the current, against the steady wind. To fit her for the downward voyage the flooring of her lower

deck had been removed, leaving a dozen holes or pits where stood the men, pulling at their unwieldy oars.

A long succession of splashes as the uneven strokes caught the water, a jerk and a click of the rowlocks, as each man walked forward leaning on his oar ; a thud and a moment's pause as they fell back, lying almost flat upon the deck ; and then another splash, keeping time to a rude monotonous chant ;— all day long and far into the night were rung the changes on this new phase of their Nilotic life.

Tracking was out of the question now ; the smaller sail was still in place, but the south wind blows but fitfully in mid-winter ;— when the rowing paused there was nothing for it but to let the boat drift broadside down the stream,— an unwieldy mass, as helpless as some crippled bird.

One morning — this was the second or third day after Aboo Simbel — the men had ceased rowing, and the *Princess* lay rolling and tossing in mid-stream.

Bell and Arthur had landed at the nearest point and were walking down the bank, followed by a man in the small boat. They were perhaps some half a mile above the town of Derr. It was a lovely morning. The tall white stalks of the bean-flowers were bending and nodding in the sun ; the river was all ruffled with the breeze, breaking into ripples of a deep dark purple-blue ; and the full careless gladness of the day seemed in fine harmony with the joyous faces of the two lovers strolling along the bank.

“I wonder if anywhere in the world there are two other people as perfectly happy as we are just now,” said Bell, looking up with a sigh of content.

“‘Call no man happy until he is dead,’ ” answered Livingston sententiously.

“I should quite hate the man who invented that proverb, Arthur, if I did not pity him so much for all he must have missed in his life. I can’t answer for you, of course ; but as for myself, if I live a hundred years, and each year is worse than the one that went before, I

shall still think life was well worth the having. I shall have been perfectly happy — once!"

"Don't tempt Providence by making such reckless speeches, child," said Arthur, burying his hands in the depth of his pockets and looking round at her with an amused, but still affectionate, smile.

"It is different for you, I know," Bell went on, speaking rather wistfully; "but as for me — I'm not accustomed to being so happy, Arthur; it frightens me. I look back now at all the colorless years I have lived through, contentedly enough, and I don't understand myself. I don't recognize myself any more. Until such a short time ago it seemed so natural to me not to care for any one very particularly; and now — oh, Arthur, if any thing should happen to part us now! — if ever you should discover that you had made a mistake — that I was not as good as —"

She hesitated and looked away from him across the broad blue sweep of the river's bend. "I've been too happy to give it up again. I could not give it up!" she said passionately.

"What you need are a few lessons in eighteenth-century philosophy, Bell. *Glissez, heureux mortel, — n'appuyez pas!* There is nothing beautiful in this world that is not sad as well, if you only think of it long enough. The mistake is to think of it at all. Don't look at the under side of the cards, and don't get into a way of caring too much for any thing or any one, my dear, unless you are ready to give up caring to keep your peace of mind —" He stopped short, and looked at her with a laugh. "The preposterous absurdity of my warning any one not to care too much for me," he said lightly. "How my old friends would stare if they heard me talking to you in this fashion; — I, who always distinguished myself by a prudent aversion to the society of young girls! And, by the way, that reminds me, I must write to my sister."

"I should like to know your sister. Is she any thing like you?" Miss Hamlyn asked.

" You would get along well enough together, I fancy. Isabel is a very good girl in her way," said her brother carelessly. " And there is this advantage about my sister : — any one who knows her at all can always predict to a dead certainty what will be her opinion on any given subject. You have not an idea what a saving of trouble that is to her friends. One never needs to speculate about Isabel. Now, for instance, I know precisely what questions she will put to me about you and about your people ; I can very nearly predict the order in which they will come. I hope you have quantities of defunct ancestors somewhere or other, Bell ? There is nothing that pleases my sister more than a well authenticated list of the slain, and I know she would approve of, and understand my falling in love with, any girl who was well provided with dead and buried grandfathers."

" I don't know, I'm sure," said Bell doubtfully ; " I'll ask papa : but I'm afraid — I'm very sorry if you care about that sort of thing, Arthur — but I'm afraid as a family we are not anybody in particular, you know. There is my grandfather Hamlyn, to be sure, but he has only been dead about five years, and I'm afraid that would not count for much in an ancestor. Still, your sister is very welcome to him if she likes. He was so disagreeable to me while he was living, poor old fellow, it would be odd if he did me a good turn now ! "

" Never mind, then, dear ; we will bury the subject, ancestors and all," said Arthur, laughing.

They walked on a little way in silence. " And what will be your sister's next question, Arthur ? " Miss Hamlyn asked, turning her face away as she spoke, and stooping down to gather a few of the sweet white flowers that brushed against her feet.

" Her next question ? oh, about your friends, I suppose. The set of people you know, and all that sort of thing," he answered carelessly ; " but, by Jove ! look where we have left the boat ! and — look between those palms, Bell ; there, in a line with my hand ! Can't you

make out a second bit of red high up above the bank? If I'm not mistaken, it is a flag, and the *Cleopatra* has caught up with us again. That means rowing through the night if they have got here."

"I suppose so," she assented indifferently. "See here, Arthur; I want to tell you about some things you ought to know. I thought you did know them — had understood them long ago. I am not quite like other girls, dear. My mother died when I was a baby. I never knew her. I hardly ever missed her — until lately. That seems a hard thing to say, does it not? And yet it is the truth. Until lately, until very lately, Flossy was my companion and sympathizer to such a degree I hardly realized that other girls had something more than that — something I've missed. For Flossy is not stronger morally than I am. I do what she wishes as long as it is indifferent to me. When I have wanted my own way I have taken it. I've had no one to appeal to, no one to throw the responsibility upon. Hitherto my life has been what circumstances and I have made it between us; and I certainly have not had cause to be invariably proud of my work. No, stop! Let me finish what I have to tell you, please. It is not so pleasant I care to repeat it twice. I told you long ago I had never had any friends. It is the literal fact — and you may tell your sister so. I've grown up alone and I've lived alone. Until I knew you I never knew how much I could care for any one. As for our set — tell your sister you are going to marry into a family of people who knew no one and belong to no one; people whose relations with society are all of last year's growth and date from the day we landed in England. There is no use in ignoring the truth, Arthur; we Hamlyns belong to the class of social *mushrooms*!"

She was standing directly in front of him, looking at him steadily as she spoke. The wind was blowing her loose blonde hair in a soft floating cloud about her face; her cheeks were flushed, her eyes grown big and dark with excitement. Behind her stretched a

background of shining river and a wind-swept field of flowers.

"Yes, social mushrooms, thorough-going parvenus," she repeated, with a sort of anxious defiance.

Livingston looked at her fixedly for a moment and smiled. "The social mushroom is a plant that flourishes very well on American soil," he answered quietly; "must I be accused of bad taste if I admit I have a weakness for mushrooms? For the first time in my life I regret that I am not your friend Captain Blake. You would make such a capital sketch just as you are standing there, and I don't like that photograph of yours. I'm sorry if it sounds complimentary—I hate saying such self-evident things—but that photo is not half pretty enough to do you justice, Bell."

Miss Hamlyn sighed, laughed, and sat down on the trunk of a palm-tree with a movement of comic despair. "Don't tell me that is your fashion of dealing with all the serious questions of life, Arthur," she said in a tone of curiously mingled amusement and vexation. "Do you know, sometimes, when I see you looking so aggravatingly contented—or indifferent—at the recital of my perplexities, I feel as though I should be almost justified in introducing incidents of dramatic effect, merely to give you the interest of surprise in some chapters of my past history."

"As though a child like you had any past history at all!" said Arthur carelessly.

"Am I a child? Perhaps not so much of one as you think," answered Bell slowly; and then, with a sudden change of tone, "I know you will laugh at me for saying so, but I wish—I do wish—you had not any money at all, Arthur dear," she said; "friends, family, wealth,—there is absolutely nothing left for me to give you that you have not got; there is absolutely nothing left for me to do but play the rôle of the Beggar Maid to such a King Cophetua."

Derr is a large village—a long scattering line of square brown houses, with square flat roofs, built, like

all Nubian houses, of smooth slabs of river-mud. A network of wide white paths leads down to the river bank and winds in and out between the groups of palms that here grow three or four together, starting from a common centre. An endless row of *sakiah* wheels perched along the bank were splashing and creaking in the morning sunshine ; now and then a gaunt and hungry-looking Pariah dog followed the two howadji for a few steps, or some half-naked child raised a cry of "backsheesh!" from behind the shelter of the tree. As they neared the village they met groups of veiled women carrying large water jars on their heads — women with long flowing garments that fluttered in the wind, and slender, bare brown arms, looking like a procession of figures upon some Etruscan vase — who turned round to stare at the strangers as they passed ; farther on a dozen men, armed with long staves, came forward with antiquities to sell ; their *cortège* included some twenty or thirty people by the time they reached the principal street.

Here the houses were built closer together, and stretched — a long brown line of irregular squares — far up the side of the barren sun-baked hill to where a low brown mass of ruins marked the site of the old temple of Rameses. Some of the doors were open. At one place, built into the wall, above the entrance, was a bit of pink and white French porcelain — a piece of plunder from some passing dahabeah. The simpering face of the Watteau shepherdess in the centre of the plate seemed all the more incongruous as they stopped to look in at the doorway she helped to decorate. For there, in the inner courtyard, two women were grinding corn. They were crouching on the ground, kneeling before a couple of small millstones laid one upon the other in a shallow basket, which caught the flour as it fell. They wore dresses of black or very dark blue ; one of them was quite pretty, but she kept her head turned away and one could only catch a glimpse of her great frightened brown eyes and the gleam of some silver ornament in her hair. The door behind them was half open, and a

stray sunbeam slanting in turned all the flying dust into a mist of gold, and lit up the tattooed face and curious head-dress of the old woman, who was busy shovelling out the soft white flour into a cloth spread upon the ground.

And Derr was but the prelude to twenty other such villages, scattered along the bank or lost among the Desert sands. For the descent of the Nile is a continual stopping, a passing from temple to ruin, from solitary column to decorated tomb. The weather had turned colder after leaving Derr ; for days and days a chill south wind fretted to foam the olive waters of the river, and the men labored wearily at the oars, pulling slowly down past the long reaches of the Desert, the long procession of the wind-vexed palms. And still, from temple to temple, past the vivid, flower-bright, flower-delicate walls of 'Amada ; past the great propylons of Dakkeh ; past the wide wilderness of overthrow, the confusion of ruin, that makes a chaos of Kalabsheh ; and on and on, they drifted steadily down through the long still days, the long still nights of Nubia.

It was a curious life ; monotonous and yet full of ever-shifting change, for now the river ran past some low range of desolate hills of stone, at their feet a narrow strip of cultivated earth — the all in life of some poor wretched fellaheen. It was perhaps a patch of lupins, and they caught the faint sweet smell of the white blossoms as they rowed slowly by, the sails hanging loose and empty in the evening calm, until the river swept away round the bend, the mountains fell farther back, and before them the "lone and level sands stretched far away," broken here and there by a pale gray mass — a clump of larch-trees, faded and wan, looking like the trees of some primeval world — that melted away like ghosts into the twilight.

Or perhaps it was high noon and they saw some train of camels heavy laden and travel-worn, lying in uncouth rest upon the sand or twisting their long

necks to snatch a mouthful of green from the few scanty bushes scattered along the shore. Behind them rose a jagged line of hills—the color and shape of gigantic ash-heaps ; and the camels, plodding slowly, heavily on, seemed themselves a part of the tawny shadowless landscape—their thin gaunt figures the embodied spirits of the Desert's mystery.

And again the weather changed, and once more they floated through the warm blue windless days and watched from the upper deck the slow wide splendor of the sunset burning away behind the hills, until each memory of the Nile seemed for ever stained and penetrated with recollections of their glory and their glow.

And now, in the second month of their journey the river began to people itself with boats. Hardly a day passed without their meeting a fleet of other dahabeahs, rushing past, white winged and triumphant, or hugging the shore with drooping canvas, a long line of men harnessed to the tow-rope pulling against the stream.

But at last there came a night when the wind began blowing down the river once more, when the *Princess* and the *Cleopatra* once more spread their sails and flew like night-birds through a sea of liquid opal ; for the thin white mist mingled milkily with the moonlight and the river banks were lost in a translucent vaporous splendor.

*"Love blows as the wind blows ;
Love blows into my heart like the wind —"*

that is what the men are singing ; Ibrahim has just translated it for me," said Livingston to Bell, as they listened to the wild chant of the sailors keeping time to the splash of the oars.

They were sweeping down the stream to Philæ, sailing fast on a river of moonlight that wound whitely in and out between the towering and fantastic rock-forms—a thousand singular and distorted shapes of stone rising strangely weird and suggestive through the

mist. The palms of Philæ were dark against the sky, each long feathery branch so clear and yet so softly delicate in outline, they seemed rather the ghosts of palms than actual trees. One of them, growing high up upon the bank, seemed to have caught a falling meteor as it glided across the sky, for through its tangled tracery of branches there shone a great white star. It was as though the tree had burst into some sudden glorious blossom of pale light.

CHAPTER XVI.

ON THE BRINK.

"Our interest's on the dangerous edge of things."

"**A**ND the snake?" "Oh, that was only the hieroglyphic emblem of the king. But — speaking of serpents — did you know that we Americans ought really to consider Moses as our patron saint! Moses was the first democrat; the first man to make the symbol of kinghood express the idea of the devil, in his account of the Temptation in the Garden. It was an uncommonly good hit, and one I recommend to your benighted and conservative mind, Campbell."

"I foresee that one of these days it will be our painful duty to suppress Mr. Livingston entirely, Blake," said Tom deliberately; "it is not so much that I object to his political delusions — the poor fellow is childish, of course; I consider him quite harmless on that point — but I must protest against his treatment of the prophets. I have an immense respect for Moses, and if he *was* the first democrat — which I doubt — it would certainly seem more generous not to mention it at this late day. Forty years in the wilderness might well

unsettle any man's principles, and I call it ungrateful to recollect a prophet's political aberrations after so many centuries."

"You ought to read up what Lepsius says about Moses, Miss Horton ; you will find it very interesting. The Egyptian legends call him a renegade priest and declare that he was expelled from Egypt because the other priests believed he had incurred divine displeasure."

"But was he really a priest ? "

"He must have been. All free Egyptians belonged either to the priestly or to the military caste. Adopted by the king's daughter, and belonging to Pharaoh's household, Moses could aspire to a place in the priesthood which would never have been given to a mere Hebrew. Is it not curious to remember that those proud old Egyptians never thought the Hebrews worth mentioning in their records — considered them as a mere lot of slaves of no especial consequence, and only seemed to have recognized their existence here and there in the portrait of some Jewish looking prisoner sculptured upon some wall ; and now, to us, half the interest of Egypt centres about their sojourn here ? Manetho, the oldest Egyptian chronicler we know of, says that Moses was originally called Osarsiph, after Osiris of Heliopolis, and did not assume the name we know him by until after he had rejoined his countrymen. At Heliopolis, where he lived, the sacred bull Apis was the leading deity, so that his anger at the Israelites' worship of the Golden Calf may have been partly caused by their perversity in selecting as the symbol of their backsliding the very image most distasteful to him, the symbol of his old days and the old faith he professed among the Egyptians. And, in spite of Tom, I think he *was* a democrat ; rather an arbitrary old democrat perhaps, with somewhat confused theories on the right of free speech, but still believing all the people equally entitled to the understanding and knowledge of the religion they professed, and acting up to

his belief in explaining the mysteries of the inner or esoteric creeds to the populace, until his brother-priests could not stand it any longer and turned him out for rebelling against all the traditions of the Church."

All of which was no doubt extremely interesting, Miss Campbell remarked, in a tone strongly suggestive of the contrary ; but for her part she must consider it extremely irreverent. For Miss Campbell could never believe that it was right to have "personal views" about the Bible. "What we are told is quite enough. I should never think of wishing to know any more," she said emphatically. "And as we have but one life to live apiece, and out of that life but one moonlight night to spend at Philæ, I think we might—"

"Henceforward carefully abstain from mentioning any 'instructive' or 'curious' fact? I second the motion," said Blake laughing ; "and I call that generous now on my part, considering how vastly I contribute to your store of information as a general thing. I think only Miss Hamlyn has contrived to rival my 'flashes of silence' of late."

"Yes ; Bell is improving," said Gerty gravely. "Something, — was it Aboo Simbel or was it Mr. Livingston? I don't pretend to decide, — but something has certainly contrived to subdue that morbid craving for information about those wretched Egyptians which was such a blot on Bell's character a month ago. I've had strong hopes of her ultimate recovery ever since I saw her walking out of the temple at Derr without having looked at it. I was afraid it might merely be the effect of her joy at seeing me again, and so did not mention it at the time, but, since then, I have carefully watched Miss Hamlyn. I have seen her looking steadily at a string of Tom's imitation scarabæi without exhibiting undue symptoms of emotion ; I have seen her successfully control the wild excitement which must necessarily thrill through us all every time Kate discovers an illegible cartouche in the exact spot where 'Murray' told her to look for it ; yesterday, when I sur-

prised her sitting at the door of that temple, gazing with a beatified expression at the profile of a stone monkey, she distinctly admitted that she was *not* thinking of Rameses. Decidedly, we have ground for hope, Captain Blake;—but do you think it can be entirely owing to Aboo Simbel?"

"Why not to a former edition of Moses?—an earlier and fuller edition communicated to Miss Hamlyn alone and calculated to crush the—"

"Don't malign Livingston, Blake! He only got up those facts about Moses yesterday. He has felt it coming on for a long time I've no doubt—that's the reason he has become so averse to all sensible amusements, and preferred staying quietly at home all the evening to going out with us for a shot at those wild geese last night."

"Not going was a mere matter of precaution on my part, Campbell," said Arthur quietly; "the fact is, I feared you two fellows, getting misled by the resemblance, might begin firing at each other by mistake, and I did not care for a tragedy so soon after dinner. As for Blake, poor fellow! he is hardly accountable for his words or actions just now. A man who reads the books of the Rev. Mr. Grimes and comes up the Nile to look for the blue-eyed Nubian maidens that haunted the imagination and followed the dahabeah of that gifted countryman of mine, may be excused for any slight incoherency,—particularly if it has any reference to any thing which could by any possibility have happened 'two thousand years ago.'"

"If it was only the blue-eyed golden-haired Nubian girl one could stand the loss perhaps;—I have heard of such things as substitutes—and compensations," retorted Blake, glancing at Gerty; "but when I recollect the miles of stuffed crocodiles (small ones) I have not seen; the hundred pound fish who have not pulled me overboard; the troops of gazelles who have invariably declined to come and play about my foot-steps in the Desert; the hyænas who have never

attacked me, and the jackals who never have sat upon any of my friends' graves ;— I confess I am a disappointed man."

" You have my sympathy, old fellow, if that can do you any good," said Livingston, laughing ; " I must say when I read those candid works and reflect that in two months' time I never have held my revolver to anybody's head, or even threatened to blow anybody's brains out as a proof of superior civilization, I actually begin to doubt if I have ever been in Egypt ! "

He rose as he spoke, and crossed over to where Bell was leaning against the parapet watching the river's flow. " Will you not come and look at the moonlight in the temple, Miss Hamlyn ? " he said.

The moon had risen late that night, lifting large and full from behind the shadowy palms of Biggeh : a thin luminous vapor floated before its face.

At the temple-gate they paused a moment to look back.

Before them lay a fair white world, moonlit and softly radiant ; a world asleep, silent, yet full of shifting light, of faint uncertain sound ;— the muffled rustle of the wind among the palms ; the lift and fall of the cataract's voice ; a flitting shadow of wings ; the far-off cry of some night-bird calling to its mate through the warm stillness.

In the open courts and between the columns the light streamed in and lay in great white patches on the ground ; beyond that stretched a " horror of great darkness," mystery ; silence ; the eternal light ; a vast and voiceless shrine, dumb as the desert, lonely as the grave.

At the farther end of the island, beyond the long unfinished line of columns, — whose sharp clear shadows lay like barriers across the path, — there is a deep window-fliche cut into the thickness of the wall, below which the smooth side of the temple reaches sheer down to the Nile.

" Bell, what are you thinking about ? " asked Livingston abruptly after a long pause. They had both been

leaning out in silence watching the wide still sweep of the river until their thoughts too seemed floating by, drifting out on the starlit tide, hastening through the night to the distant restless sea.

Bell was sitting in the shadow of the arch, her hands were listlessly folded on her lap, she was leaning back against the window's side gazing fixedly down at the hurrying water. As Arthur spoke she started and looked around at him with shining eyes full of strange doubt and of mute questioning.

"I was thinking of you, dear," she answered after a moment's hesitation. "Arthur, — I want to tell you —" She stopped, and turned her face away.

For she had been thinking of him — and of Alice. The story of his old unforgotten love for this dead woman, who had been dead so long, had appealed to Bell's imagination, had touched her fancy, with a curious force. The girl was attracted, fascinated, preoccupied. Her imagination was possessed by the thought of this hopeless love, this lost ideal of his youth. For Livingston all the latent generosity, the womanly pity of Bell's nature had been roused and brought into play, — but she was intensely jealous of Alice. She was jealous with a sickening sense of failure, of revolt against the injustice of that fate which had given to this woman the opportunity of utter self-sacrifice to the man they had both loved, while to her, Bell, every possible solution of the position into which she had drifted seemed inevitably destined to lower her in Arthur's eyes.

And where Alice had been ready to give up the world for love, could she do less? There were moments when she was wellnigh glad that she had it in her power to sacrifice George, her plighted word, any thing, every thing, — moments in which she longed for some supreme surrender, some wild act of devotion, before which the very memory of Alice and those old old days should pale and lessen and fade away. For the more she loved Livingston with deep and retrospective tenderness that reached to every moment of pain he had ever endured,

the more she suffered in remembering the woman who had made those old days dear to him.

But she had never spoken to him about Alice again. Had he ever thought of it at all, Livingston would have been ready to affirm that Bell had never once remembered the story he had told her that day at Aboo Simbel. And yet, I doubt if it was ever wholly absent from her mind. She brooded over it constantly, believing it to be constantly present to him. For Bell forgot to count the years that had intervened ; herself possessed by an imperious and absorbing passion, full of vitality, strong with the untried strength of youth, she forgot, or rather she had never realized the slow, sure, deadening influence of Time. What Arthur had expressed to her in a moment of strong excitement,— his last look back at the old dead life, — she mistook for the habitual tenor of his thought. Had she known the truth, — how dim and distant now seemed to him that past, how calmly he remembered now those old passionate days of his youth, how much of habit, how little of poignant regret, there was in that very remembrance, — she might have been happier in her love. I question if it would ever have been half so compelling or so absolute.

But this she could not know, and drifting on through the long still twilights, or when they sat silently on deck, hushed by the stillness and the mystery of the night, she was always remembering ; remembering and wondering if he too remembered, — if he too were thinking of what had been.

And it was this, or something of all this, which kept Miss Hamlyn silent that night at Philæ. She often wondered afterwards what would have happened had she spoken then — then, when every thing was still so comparatively simple, so easily put right.

Now and then the voices of the others jarred and broke upon the stillness ; once a distant peal of laughter made them both turn and look to where, on the propylon's top, some dark moving figures could be seen outlined against the moon-whitened stone.

"They are up in our old place. Do you remember that sunset, Bell? and our talk up there between the wind and the clouds? and—the coming down? How long ago it all seems!"

"A month; no,—three weeks ago I think."

"It seems more like three years."

"For that matter, I could easily believe we left Cairo a century or two ago. Looking back to that time is like looking through the wrong end of an opera-glass,—it is all so small and so far off. Do you know, Arthur, I think if a plan of my life could be drawn out it would not look unlike Egypt itself on the map—this old Nile seems to cover all the space," she added, laughing.

"It is curious how every thing seems to turn upon an accident," said Livingston; "now this coming to Egypt, for instance. It was really the merest chance that I came at all. I was lounging about the Tyrol meaning to go to Paris for the winter when I got a letter from Fred Meredith telling me to come down to Venice and join them for a few days before they started. And then Ferris talked me into starting with them."

"Ferris?—not George Ferris!"

"Yes, George. I never should have thought of coming if it had not been for him. He was dining with us the night before the steamer sailed; we all got to talking about the Nile and the East and all that, and he got so excited about it, and so eloquent,—you know his fashion of firing up about any thing which interests him,—that he and Fred fairly talked me into going. I only wish he could have come with us."

Bell was silent.

"He's a good fellow, Ferris is," Arthur went on leisurely. "It was a pity he could not come along, particularly as he did not seem to be doing any thing of very especial consequence there in Venice. He had got some idea in his head about some mine his father had been taking shares in,—he was talking to Meredith

about it, I know, — and he seemed to think it was going to turn out a great success and make all their fortunes. Pity he lets himself get mixed up with things outside of his painting, I think, for he has got any quantity of talent. I must write to him one of these days and tell him what a good turn he did me, sending me up here to meet you, Bell? By the way, you write to him occasionally, don't you? Let me know in time, and I'll put a postscript in your next letter if you like?"

Miss Hamlyn had been resting her head on her hand as though to shield her eyes from the glitter of the water ; now, as he paused for an answer, she lifted up her face, drawing farther back into the shadow. "I do not know. I cannot tell. I do not know if I shall ever write to Mr. Ferris again," she said in a low voice hardly above a whisper. The night was very warm, but she was shivering from head to foot as she spoke.

"Oh, well, it doesn't matter. Any time will do," he answered carelessly. But the subject seemed to interest him, for, after a moment, "That is what I call happiness," he said slowly, "To be twenty-five and a painter ; to have the world all before you where to choose and all the illusions of an artist to help one through. And Ferris is a handsome fellow too. And then, and above all, he is young. Bell, do you know how old I am ?"

"No."

"Thirty-five. Ten years older than Ferris, at least."

"I don't care."

"The ten best years of life. Do you know that it is a curious perversity on your part to care for me, Bell. A child like you had no business to fall in love with any man who could not give her all his youth, all his ambition, his future. I can't shake off a feeling of the unfairness of the thing when I compare your untroubled, untouched life, with all its dreams and its blessed illusions still about it, to all the weariness, the discouragement and the failure you must necessarily be witness

of in me. Sometimes I wonder if you are quite sure of what you are doing. Understand me, dear! it is not that I distrust you — Heaven knows I don't! — but I have seen so many things come to an end, — so many mistakes made that might have been prevented, — so much wretchedness the result of such slight blunders. It is not as though I were Ferris's age, for instance, and could — ”

“ Arthur,” said Bell suddenly, leaning forward, “ Arthur, for Heaven’s sake let Mr. Ferris alone! You — you pain me by drawing such comparisons between yourself and anybody else. What is Mr. Ferris — what is all the world to me since I have met you? Oh, my love, my love, don’t you know, — don’t you see, — will you never understand how dearly I love you? ”

She stretched out both hands to him with a gesture of passionate appeal: “ I did not think you would doubt me, Arthur,” she said reproachfully, as he bent forward and kissed her.

It was not that she meant to deceive him; but there is a fatality about some things.

That night Miss Hamlyn could not get to sleep. A distressing, persistent, and yet formless anxiety encompassed her about as with a cloud, — an intangible mist blurring and obliterating all beyond it. And when, at last, weary and worn with a long and fruitless effort to ignore, if she could not reconcile, the conflicting purposes of her life, when at last she fell asleep it was only to find again the same vague yet overwhelming sense of trouble underlying the fantastic shifting of her dreams.

It was late when she awoke. When she went upstairs every thing was in readiness for the descent of the Cataract; the deck cleared; the divans stripped of their cushions; the carpet taken up from the floor; every movable stowed away, and everywhere a pressing pushing crowd that centred about the group of Cataract chiefs smoking placidly upon the upper deck.

The morning wore slowly away. Every moment a

group of new comers joined, and added to, the confusion and the crowd, and still the sheikhs smoked on. Messenger after messenger clambered back, dripping and breathless from out the river; a score of little boats with ragged sails flitted about the dahabeahs; men with ropes, men with sticks, men dragging long poles, came, went, entreated, protested, gesticulated, shrieked themselves hoarse with excitement, and still the sheikhs slowly sipped their coffee and silently watched the blue smoke curling above the nargilehs. At last one of them rose, loosened his turban and bared his knotted sinewy arms. The dragoman was called to give a last injunction to his howadji to sit flat down on the deck out of the way of the steersman, and the two boats moved slowly off. After a few moments they stopped again to moor the *Cleopatra* to a rock, and her consort began the descent alone.

It was a beautiful blue morning. Not a sound was to be heard but the thud of the long clumsy oars in the rowlocks or a sharp low cry from the man at the helm, as they slowly threaded their way through a labyrinth of intricate passages between the jagged rocks. Presently the current grew narrower, swifter, more irresistible; the river turned sharply to the right and disappeared in an opening between two rocks.

As the current caught her, the boat seemed to plunge and rear like a spirited horse; she gave one convulsive start, paused for an instant and hung motionless, balancing on the brink, and then rushed headlong down faster and faster until her bows seemed literally to bury themselves under the water that fell away in waves on either side. Nobody spoke. The men crouched silently upon the deck, every face was fixed, intent; every eye straining ahead. On either side of them rose a sheer wall of stone barely far enough off to clear the end of the outstretched oars. Between these black barriers poured a blacker stream, a smooth heaped-up mass, hollowed away on either side; an unbroken irresistible rush of mighty waters sweeping on

with incredible force, as though striving to tear asunder and force their way through the impeding rocks.

The Nile was low that year, and the dahabeah a large one. It would have been a curious spectacle for any one watching her from the shore to have seen the still suppressed excitement of that moment ; the impassive faces of the men ; the hurrying, trembling, straining boat, struggling like some living creature against the compelling fatality of the fall ;—about them a wilderness of menacing rocks, of black and surging water, and still farther, stretching all around them to the very horizon, the ample stillness, the vast golden serenity, of the Desert.

All at once the chief jumped up and waved his turban in the air ;—a sharp shrill order that cut through the silence like a knife,—a rush of a dozen men to the helm,—and the great boat swung sharply round, the rocks parted and fell back, the *Princess* shot out from the shadow into the pleasant morning sunshine, and they found themselves floating on a still wide stream, gliding smoothly along up to the very Desert's brink.

Hitherto the crew had been perfectly quiescent, neither helping nor joining the Cataract people ; crowding together, letting themselves be pushed aside or trampled over by the hurrying Nubians ; attentive, expectant, and idle. But as the *Princess* made her last effort, and gained the safety of the smoother water, one of the men rushed upstairs with his cymbals, another followed him with the drum, and then another, and another,—in a moment they had formed a circle on the deck and were chanting a wild song of victory and exultation, the drums beating, the brazen cymbals clashing, the sailors keeping time with head and hands and feet. Everybody was shaking hands with everybody else ; everybody was laughing ; everybody was talking at the top of his voice. It was an indescribable confusion of light, of sound, of movement ; a noisy reaction from intense suspense ; a loud,

barbaric triumph over the conquered Nile, until the very oarsmen caught the infection and danced and sang as the great oars struck the waters once more, hurrying downward to Assouan.

An hour later they were all together on the bank, under the palms, and before the market-place of the town.

The morning's excitement had been like a breath of fresh air blowing through the warm sultry atmosphere of their Nilotic experience. It was a sensation after a month of impressions. They all felt tingling with life, alert, expectant, overflowing with joyous excitement.

But it was especially in Bell that a revolution of mood had taken place. A strong reaction from the depression of a few hours before had filled her with a reckless gladness impossible to define. She moved and spoke and laughed with a careless security, a sense of perfect freedom from either foreboding or regret.

"One would think you expected to have been drowned, Bell, you seem so preposterously happy and relieved to have got down here," Gerty suggested curiously.

"Let us all go and do something. I must do something. What can we possibly do?" Miss Hamlyn answered; "try and think of something, all of you. I propose —"

And it was just then that Livingston came back with the dragoman. He had been to the post-office, and they all made a rush at him, laughing, happy, eager for home news.

The first letter Miss Hamlyn saw was a large thick envelope covered with stamps and blackened with a dozen different postmarks and addresses. She turned it over and looked at the handwriting.

It was from George Ferris.

CHAPTER XVII.

"THE GODS ARE HARD TO RECONCILE."

"Il importe moins de savoir ce que l'homme peut ne *pas* commettre, que ce qu'ayant commis il peut effacer." — CHASLES.

IT was a long letter, six or eight pages closely written. Miss Hamlyn never read it through. She held it in her hand, she took it out and looked at it a dozen times a day, — but she never read it through. Night after night the girl lay awake thinking of it, dreading it, looking out with blank dismay at the darkling river, seeking strange counsel from the silence and the stars.

At last she resolved to remain perfectly passive, to take no decisive step, to seek no explanation with Arthur until they reached Thebes. Farther than that she refused to let her thoughts wander. "Between now and Thebes — but not now," this was the decision she reached at last ; and the mere fact of having settled even so much was an indescribable relief. She clung to that date with the desperate courage of cowards ; feeling almost as though by so doing she was throwing the responsibility of the step on some one else, — on fate, — on some power outside of herself and beyond her control.

Once indeed she did make an effort at something more. They were still seven or eight days above Thebes. The weather had changed again. Since early morning the *Princess* had been anchored to a sandbank stretching out in mid stream. Before them, just ahead, was a point of the river not to be passed without a favoring wind, and all day long the boat had rocked heavily on the roughening water waiting for the storm to abate. The deck was intolerable ; great clouds of yellow sand

blowing across the colorless sky enveloped the boat and blotted out the water like a fog. Here and there on the sandspit a vulture sat dejectedly with drooping head, or sailed slowly over the boat with dark wide wings outspread. Then the dragoman would take down his gun,—fire at him,—miss him; the feeble excitement subsided, and again the sailors threw themselves down on the deck, crouching in cold discomfort, muffled up to the eyes in their great black cloaks.

The poetry and charm of the Nile seemed dead for ever; drowned in the sullen leaden water, stifled and buried beneath the sand. Every thing looked chilly and mutely wretched—made only the more so by the appearance of a pale sun shining with a white sirocco glare. There is nothing more heartless or more discouraging than sunshine on a windy day.

Miss Hamlyn spent the afternoon in the cabin, alone. Flossy had a headache; the others were all in their rooms. She sat very still, only moving now and then, mechanically putting out her hand to caress the pet kitten, who was climbing all over her, purring with content, playing with her fingers, stealing the cream for the tea, and then smelling affectedly at the bean flowers wreathed about the water-bottle when caught in the act.

She sat very still; there was an open book on the table before her, but she never even looked at it. She sat all wrapped up in shawls, her head leaning on her hand, thinking. A vague; tormenting, preoccupying recollection of George's letter hung heavily about her; obtruding itself with perpetual weary reiteration. However much the idea possessed her, she could hardly be said ever to have really faced it and thought about it hitherto; she was troubled rather by a sense of coming difficulty than by either understanding or remorse. A sort of mental paralysis seemed to steal over her whenever she tried to remember the past, to realize and face the possible exigencies of the future. There was nothing definite, neither regret nor defiance, in this continual brooding over her situation. Every thing relating to

Ferris, or to her own position towards him, seemed as though lost in a dense mist of doubt, through which loomed up terrible uncertain forms, dim shapes foretelling sorrow and despair, — a darkening, thickening, threatening cloud she shrank from even trying to penetrate. She may be said never to have thought of him at all — she was always conscious of him, — conscious of him as might be some poor wretch in a hospital, half asleep, yet vaguely conscious of the glimmering dawn, of the hastening morrow, of the surgeon's knife.

As for Livingston —

Late in the afternoon Arthur came in. He had been reading to Mr. Hamlyn, who was again ill with the fever. For a moment, as she saw him, Bell lost her self-command. "Arthur!" she cried, starting up and hurrying forward to meet him, "Arthur! —" Her voice faltered; in another moment she would, I think, have told him all, but she looked up in his face, and the surprise she saw there stilled and steadied her. "I — you startled me coming in," she said, speaking very gently and taking her hand from off his arm.

Livingston had come to take her out for a walk on the sandspit before dinner. The river was too rough to risk crossing over to the shore. As they went out they saw the sun shining round and white through the sand-storm, like a round, watery, full moon. There was no sunset, only a deeper yellow tinge to the driving clouds of sand which rose and wavered like smoke as the khem-seen now abated for an instant and now lashed the leaden-colored water into foam. "Take my arm," said Livingston, as they turned to face the wind.

The sand by the river's brink was firm and hard, broken into a thousand ripples and wavelets, like the sand of the sea, but farther on it grew deeper in color, drifted down from the desert and loosely piled, — crumbling under their feet at every step. It was hard work, walking, and the wind kept them breathless and dumb. Once, as they got under the lee of a rock, — "What was the matter with you a little while ago, dear?" Arthur

asked. "You looked so strangely,—almost as though you had been crying?" But Miss Hamlyn smiled brightly up at him; her face was all flushed with the exercise, she was clinging to his arm with both hands; a curious sense of safety, of protection, seemed to possess her, as they struggled on together doing successful battle with the storm.

"Oh, I was only thinking. It was nothing," she answered breathlessly.

And so the days passed slowly by, until at length they stopped one afternoon to rest the men, anchoring some fifteen or twenty miles above Thebes. And then Bell knew that the time and the day had come.

Hitherto she seemed never to have wholly believed in it. Hitherto there had always been some margin, some poor slight respite, to interpose between herself and the necessity for action, but now the day had come. It was here—present, imperative, absolute. To the very last she clung with lessening confidence to every pretext for delay, hoping against hope for some intervention, some miracle of help. This very morning the falling wind had given her courage,—later on she listened to the steady recurrent splash of the oars as a man might listen to the regular ticking of the prison clock, counting and measuring out the last hour of his life. A sort of blind terror had seized upon the girl; she felt incapable of reason, of reflection, of purpose. The absolute necessity of making a full confession to Livingston before they reached Thebes seemed the only fixed and central fact of her existence, the only thing about which there was, there could be, no doubt.

And every thing seemed to move in accordance with this necessity. She had looked perhaps for some interruption from the others, but the others were all occupied with themselves. Miss Horton and Tom were "up to their eyes in scarabei," packing and putting in order their various collections; Gerty and Blake were out somewhere, sketching—"A farewell sketch, a sort of valedictory before we reach Thebes," Gerty had

called it, and Bell wondered vaguely why Thebes should be any thing to *her*. And it was Livingston who proposed that walk.

On the farther side of the river was a village, and still beyond it, past the long line of palms, some crude brick ruins stood out in sharp relief against the sky. But where the boats had anchored the barren sands were heaped in huge rounded hills, sweeping away in long smooth curves, in endless undulating lines that faded and lost themselves in the far distance of the Desert.

Between two of these hills, and coming down to the water's edge, was a broad winding track, the old caravan road—a pathway from the river to the remotest East. And it was down this road they went.

It was a lovely day. The cloudless sky, flushed near the horizon with a flickering glow of color, a faint rose-tint, subtle and impalpable as a perfume. The dry warm wind of the Desert blew faintly, fitfully about them; there was such peace, such a perfection of stillness in the afternoon, the very light seemed lingering longer on the hills, lingering as though loath to go.

For the first half mile the ground was uneven, strewn with broken fragments of Roman pottery and beds of variegated stones—blue, black, yellow, red—making a rude mosaic of the ground. As they walked on Livingston stopped every few minutes to pick up some shining pebble, some rosy-veined agate from the path, and presently he poured a whole heap of curiously stained and tinted stones into Bell's lap.

When they first sat down he had begun telling her some story about Meredith, to which she listened idly, turning over her stones with listless fingers, building them up in pyramids or tracing fantastic characters with them on the sand.

"What *are* you doing, Arthur?" she said suddenly, looking up with a start.

One of her hands was resting carelessly upon the

ground. While he was speaking he had been heaping the sand up over it, burying her arm and wrist quite out of sight. "Don't move, I'm preparing for an excavation after a fashion of my own," he said, laughing; "see here, Bell. You are a sphinx, let us say—you're precious like one at times, I can tell you; and I'm Mariette or Benzoni, or any one else you like. Worn out by a long and fruitless series of explorations after hidden treasure I am resting in a melancholy attitude, reflecting gloomily upon the downfall of my hopes and the futility of effort, when a slight but suspicious-looking depression of the soil attracts my experienced glance. I dig and dig with feverish haste; suddenly I come across the concealed object;—I uncover a hand—a wrist; I brush off the last covering of sand and, carried away by the noble enthusiasm of science, I press my lips upon the insensate granite—so—"

"What a foolish, foolish fellow you are, Arthur," she said caressingly.

He looked up, his eyes met hers and they both laughed.

Miss Hamlyn had beautiful hands, supple, long-fingered, rosy-tipped. He took them both in his and kissed them one after the other. "What pretty little hands you have, child; all dimpled and white and warm. You must have a ring to wear on them when we get back to Cairo."

"Must I?"

"A ring with a name and a date. What date shall we put in? Shall it be that day up at Aboo Simbel or to-morrow? By this time to-morrow I mean to have settled every thing with your father, to have gracefully undergone Mrs. Hamlyn's good wishes and inaugurated an entirely new system of things. Imagine Meredith's face? Dear old boy! he read a sort of prophetic marriage service over me the night before he left us, I remember. Margaret will be pleased, I know."

"I hope so," said Bell.

"I hope you will end by becoming great friends, you

and Mrs. Meredith," Livingston went on ; "she is such a thoroughly good style of woman ; so free from littleness and affectation. And with all her beauty she is not a flirt. You can't make a friend out of a woman who flirts ; it's an impossibility, and you will find it out one of these days with your friend Gerty, or I'm mistaken. Good Heavens ! what a list of the slain and wounded that girl must keep in her head ! I can't say I envy the fellow who marries her in the end."

"Well, but, Arthur —"

"My dear child, I know what you are going to say. But it's of no use. Call it prejudice, injustice, any thing you like, the fact remains the same. Of course one has flirted one's self ; of course one has admired and been more or less sentimental over dozens of women in one's time, but that has nothing to do with it. The girl one marries is outside all that sort of thing. Bluebeard had the exclusive monopoly of the skeletons in the closet, you remember. For my part I can't conceive of a man marrying a girl with a 'story.' A woman, *encore passe*, but a young girl —"

Miss Hamlyn turned her face away. Livingston still held one of her hands in his ; with the other she could touch George Ferris's letter.

"Yes. I think you are quite right," she answered slowly.

"Do you know, on the whole I am glad we shall get in so soon at Thebes, dear," he added, after a pause ; "you see — don't be annoyed at me for saying it — but I cannot help regretting you would not let me speak to your father about you at once. We are both pretty sure of his approval, I know, and by keeping our own counsel so far we have certainly escaped the nuisance of having a mob of sympathizing people initiated into our private affairs. I understand all that, but still —" He smiled and leaned forward to look into her averted face. "I shall trust to you not to take too great advantage of such a precedent. Remember you are never to ask me to do any thing of that kind again," he

said lightly ; "it is really too late for me to begin deceiving the people around me. I'm afraid I can't do it again—not even for love of you."

She turned and looked at him a moment, the color slowly flushing to her face.

"That is the first time you have ever said you loved me. You never told me so before," she said at last.

"Do you mean to pretend that you don't know I love you, Bell?"

Something rose to her throat, choking her, preventing her from speaking ; something rose to her eyes, blurring together the wide stretch of sky and sand, blotting out the sunlight, the sight of Arthur's face.

She put her hand up to her throat in an uncertain, hesitating way.

"I — no, you never told me so before," she said indistinctly ; "I don't—I — There are a great many things to explain. There is a letter — You had better read this first. I am not sure — But there are a great many things to explain—afterwards—" Her voice stopped short, but she looked at him still with the same strange smile.

Then she got up, and all the many-colored pebbles rolled from her lap and lay in a shining heap upon the sand. Then she gave him Ferris's letter and walked away.

From the top of the hill where they had been sitting they overlooked a lone and level plain, a wide expanse of pale brown, pale yellow, and palest rosy gray, with here and there a stain of faded green where a patch of the coarse halfch-grass seemed spilled upon the sand. At their feet the river ran in long silvery curves, winding in and out between the islands ; the sky was of pale blue at the horizon, rose red above. The sleepy wind, grown cooler as the long slow shadows crept farther across the plain, blew from out the Desert like the breath of the coming night. An unutterable stillness and peace brooded over the wide empty landscape, hushing, charming away the heat and effort of the day.

And in the midst of this great silence, this ineffable repose, the girl stood breathless, dumb, leaning against the rock that overhung the plain, staring blindly out before her. What she thought of, what she felt, God only knows. She stood there passive, motionless, expectant, until—it might have been five minutes, it might have been an hour later for aught she knew—she heard behind her the sound of footsteps brushing through the sand.

She did not turn around. Livingston came up and stood beside her. For a moment he did not speak. Then he carefully folded up the letter he held in his hand, fitted it methodically into its envelope, and handed it back to Bell.

“Thank you,” he said.

His voice seemed to break the spell which bound her. She started; she drew a long breath; she moved; she went close up to him and put her hand upon his arm.

“Arthur!” she said appealingly,—she did not dare look at him yet,—“Arthur!—”

He did not move. He neither accepted her caress nor repulsed it.

“Are you not going to speak to me, Arthur?”

“I will ask you one question. You were already engaged to Mr. Ferris when I first met you?”

“Yes.”

“And later on—at Aboo Simbel—you had not broken this engagement off?”

She bowed her head without speaking.

“You were still engaged to him at Aboo Simbel?”

“I—Oh, Arthur!—”

“You were engaged to marry him;—yes or no?”

“I was engaged to marry him,—yes. But, Arthur—if you would only listen—”

He laughed a short, abrupt laugh, and turned impatiently away.

“There; that will do. I don’t care for any more explanations, thank you.”

Silence.

"When you are quite ready—I don't want to hurry you;—but shall we go back to the boat?"

She clasped her hands tighter together, and again that curious sensation of choking seemed to rise and fill her throat.

"Shall we go?" he repeated, after a pause, but without moving, and without lifting his eyes from the ground.

"Wait!"

She held up her hand with a slight gesture of dissent. Then after a moment she began, speaking very fast but very low, keeping her glance fixed upon the palms waving lazily to and fro on the opposite shore. They were both facing the river, and neither one had looked at the other as yet.

"Arthur, I know you will understand. But there are a great many things to explain. It was impossible you should understand at first—quite impossible. When I say I was engaged—Of course it is difficult to understand at first. If you will only be patient a little while—But it is impossible you should leave me so—quite impossible. You cannot leave me so, Arthur. Don't you understand yourself you cannot leave me so, without telling me any thing; without—"

"And what more would you have me say? What is there left to say? You were engaged to another man when I first met you. You are engaged to him still. That is—I suppose you consider yourself engaged to Mr. Ferris still?"

"Arthur—for pity's sake!—"

Her gloves and George's letter were lying where they had fallen on the ground at her feet. He stooped down; picked them up; brushed off the sand, and offered them to her with a punctilious courtesy.

"Shall we go now?" he asked again, still in the same strained monotonous voice.

Miss Hamlyn covered her face with her hands and turned away without answering. She walked off a few

paces ; her knees trembled beneath her ; she sat down and leaned her head against the rock. She felt horribly tired. Her hands were trembling ; she noticed it and looked down at them with a sort of dull surprise.

Presently Livingston came and stood before her. His face was very white and set. He spoke slowly, distinctly, with a deliberate choice of words.

“ I think it would be better to say nothing more about this — this mistake of yours. I should be sorry to say any thing in the heat of the moment which — were better left unsaid. I desire to treat you with perfect respect to the end. It will be better for both of us — I owe it to myself — to be silent.”

She bowed her head without speaking. He waited for a moment, then turned and looked at her. The blood rushed to his face, suffusing it with a dull hot red ; the veins swelled and tightened across his forehead and stood out like thick cords on his hands and wrists.

“ What you must have thought of me all along I will not try to imagine,” he said bitterly ; “ I have been a perfect fool from the very first. You cannot see that more clearly than I do myself. A blind conceited fool, ready to swallow any piece of flattery ; ready to believe in your disinterested love, in your uncalculating devotion ; ready to play any part you chose to assign to me. A credulous, infatuated fool, blind and deaf to every thing I ought to have seen — to things so glaring, so patent a child might have understood them. And I — well, I flattered myself that I understood all about women — and I trusted *you* ! ” He stopped short, breathing quick and heavily. “ Heaven preserve me from even trying to guess at your motives for all this ! Probably you had no motive in it at all. You wanted amusement, and you selected me for your pastime — and that is all. But I should like to know, I *should* like to understand, what you think you have gained by it ? We won’t speak of affection now — nor of friendship — that has nothing to do with either you or me any more : but you are proud — I have not seen you so often not to know how proud

you are ; and I should have thought you would have at least wished to retain some of my respect ! For after all — comedy, farce, as it was — you have pretended to love me. You have told me not once but a hundred times that you — ”

“ Stop ! ”

She put out her hand with a quick gesture of entreaty. “ I cannot bear it , ” she said passionately ; “ you do not know, you cannot understand — But it is no matter. I will try and bear it, only — not from you ; no, not from you. You are cruel to me, Arthur — cruel — ”

“ I beg your pardon. You are right. Let a woman do what she will, she has a claim upon one’s courtesy at least. I beg your pardon. I was wrong. But you must do me the justice to remember the provocation has been very great. A man may surely be forgiven for resenting such infernal — ” He checked himself impatiently, turning away and striking his clenched hand against the rock. “ There ! it’s of no use. I can’t help it. You had better let me go. There is absolutely no need of your trying to explain any thing. Good God ! what are you made of, to imagine that you can ‘ explain ’ your conduct in these last two months ? It is not only your deceiving Ferris, whom you may, or may not, care for — I don’t know ; — I don’t want to know ; I daresay you never cared more for him than you have cared for me, and I know what that amounts to ; — but you have deceived me ; you have amused yourself with me ; you have taken advantage of my confidence in you to make me utterly ridiculous. And every one has seen the absurdity, the folly of my position except myself. Why even your intimate friend, even Miss Campbell, has warned me of it repeatedly as openly as she dared, and I — Well ! I believed in you . ”

She looked up at him with a curious smile.

“ I have made you utterly ridiculous ! ” she said slowly, “ and — but that’s of less consequence — I think I have utterly ruined my own life. It doesn’t seem to have been a very successful course of deceit, does it, Arthur ? ”

— you will let me call you Arthur just this once more ? And so you discussed me with Gerty ? Well ! I do not think I should ever have done that to you."

Her lips trembled and her face looked all strained and worn, but her voice was quite steady, and she smiled.

" Has it by any chance occurred to you what a position you have placed me in in regard to George Ferris — Ferris, who was your engaged lover, who introduced me to you as his friend ? You have made me absurd enough, God knows, but, by Jove ! I pity Ferris."

" Mr. Ferris — Whatever happens to Mr. Ferris is between him and me. What he thinks of my conduct — that is his own affair. But if I have been false to him — "

" If ! "

" I have been false to him, then — utterly, entirely false ; but it is not you, — it is not you, Arthur, who ought to reproach me for that. For I have loved you — dearly — from the very first. In the beginning I never told you about George, because — you may believe me or not — but I never even dreamt it was possible that you could ever care for me. Afterwards it was too late. But I did love you — dearly ! You have no right not to believe that." She stopped and hesitated. She went nearer to him, and for the first time looked into his face. " I have loved you a thousand times more than — than Alice ever did," she said passionately ; " I would have done a thousand times more for you, suffered a thousand times more for you, than she ever dreamt of doing ! "

He drew back, and his face darkened again.

" We will leave *her* name out of the conversation, if you please," he said coldly.

Then, even then, the old mad jealousy surged up again, mastering, overcoming every other thought. She turned away without a word. Without a word they started down the hill.

One of the sailors had, as usual, accompanied the

howadji up from the dahabeah. At first he had kept near by, sitting on his heels at a little distance, watching them. Then he had grown tired of that, and wandered off, and fell asleep — a long blue figure stretched out upon the sand half way down the hill. Now, as they passed him, he ran after Bell calling out her name. She stopped and looked around. He had the bosom of his gown stuffed full of bright pebbles, the stones which Bell had dropped. He had amused himself by picking them all up again while the howadji talked. She looked at them, shook her head, and walked on.

"You had better take them. They will be a very appropriate souvenir," Livingston suggested.

She did not answer.

When they reached the river the *Princess* was waiting for them anchored out in mid-stream. Their man ran along the bank shouting, waving his hands, signalling to the dragoman to send a boat ashore.

The others waited for him among the palms. Miss Hamlyn stood perfectly still, leaning against a tree, her eyes fixed upon the ground. Livingston was walking up and down along the narrow towing path. The sunset that night had been of a singular splendor. They had not seen it. Now, the spaces between the trees were all filled with a shining red light ; the palm trunks glistened as though washed with molten gold ; a strange resplendent lustre transfigured the vivid green of the young wheat. After a moment a boat pushed off from the dahabeah's side. The men were singing as they rowed, the red light glistening on their black faces and bare black arms — shining and glistening along the dripping oars.

Livingston stood still ; hesitated ; came up to where Bell was standing.

"We might as well say good-by," he said abruptly.

"Good-by."

A silence. The shining light grew more intense ; long delicate lines of fire ran and crossed each other in the west. The voices of the men came floating

across the water ; they were laughing together at some blunder in their song.

"What — what are you going to do next ?" he asked hoarsely.

"I don't know."

She answered without moving. A dull, all-pervading depression possessed her. She seemed gradually ceasing to feel — to live. The voices came nearer, nearer still. A cry, — a great swash of water against the oars, — the boat was lying beneath the bank. One of the men sprang out and steadied her ; another one came clambering up to show them the way down. In a moment they had shot out again into mid-stream. The current was so powerful it was impossible to cross ; they were forced to pull some distance up and let the boat drift down again.

Livingston was steering. His eyes wandered here and there across the wide rushing river ; it seemed to him the image of his life, hurrying him onward to the very end of all. Impotent anger, a fierce burning sense of indignation held him mute, but beyond that, — as though by some revelation, — he could foresee the deep lasting discouragement in store for him, the long distaste of life.

"Again ! I must go through it again ! And for her !" he thought. He remembered with passionate regret the old tragedy of his youth ; all the uselessness of past suffering, the fatal uselessness of experience, rushed over him, overwhelmed him, filled him with silent despair. He held his eyes half shut, like a man suffering from intense headache. He seemed to have grown ten years older since morning ; his face was all white and rigid, scored with strong deep lines.

When they reached the dahabeah he went straight to his own room. After dinner the boats stopped again. Mr. Hamlyn felt better that night. He had come out of his room and was lying down on the cabin sofa, wrapped up in shawls. His face looked more cadaverous, his restless brown eyes more brilliant, than ever.

Mrs. Hamlyn was sitting by the table, sewing. Bell had a book in her hand.

"What made Livingston go out? I wish he had not gone out," Mr. Hamlyn said fretfully, after a long silence.

"Mr. Campbell had sent for him," his wife answered, looking up from her work.

Another silence.

"I wish he would come back. I want him. What does Campbell mean by sending for him to-night? Why didn't he come over himself? When did Livingston say he was coming back, Bell?"

"I don't know, papa. Shall I go on reading while you wait?"

"You may if you will read slower. And speak out. I don't know what is the matter with you to-night, you read without a particle of spirit," he answered discontentedly.

Bell took up her book again. She was reading Byron. Mr. Hamlyn could repeat whole pages of Byron by heart; it was the only poetry he either cared for or understood. The calculated passion, the deliberate self-abandonment of his own nature found its supremest expression there. He had hardly ever opened a book, — had certainly never read a line of verse — until he had passed his fortieth year, — and it was then, as a shrewd middle-aged man, that he had experienced the one strong mental emotion of his life. The strong voluptuous language, the triumphant music of Byron's verse, were to Mr. Hamlyn as the revelation of a new heaven and a new earth. Another horizon opened out before him, — opened out on that very world of dazzling picturesque passions, of luxurious gratified desire, to gain which he was struggling for wealth. The very fact that Byron was Lord Byron fascinated and satisfied his imagination. At forty he began writing verse; — feeble verse; artificial, rhetorical verse, without a trace in it of the rough nature, the rougher experience of his early life, — verse in which Spanish señoritas, Italian

countesses, Greek princesses, and nondescript men, professing the loftiest sentiments to justify them in the most ignoble of actions, enacted impossible tragedies in various islands, vaguely indicated as existing somewhere in "the South." His writing was one more concealment in the most secretive of lives. He had never spoken of it to any one.

And his delight in Byron was the greater that it was the only book he had ever personally discovered for himself. Within the last few years he had become a diligent reader. Rigidly eschewing novels—which alone could please him,—he had forced himself to struggle through hundreds of scientific, literary, historical works. As a rule he always travelled with Buckle's History and a complete edition of Macaulay's Essays. Sober, rich-looking books they were, bound in leather; his monogram and crest,—both the creation of a famous London binder,—emblazoned on their covers. His copy of Byron was a small shabby volume, worn and dim, and pencil marked at every page. He invariably carried it with him, locked away with his own manuscripts in his desk.

Presently Mrs. Hamlyn rose and left the room. Bell went on reading. She had opened the book at hazard at Parisina.

After the words

"The past is nothing — and at last
The future can be but the past,"

there was a name and a date. The name of a small trading post high up in the Rocky Mountains where Mr. Hamlyn had once spent some months for strictly unprofessional reasons.

"Isn't that Livingston coming now?"

Miss Hamlyn let her book drop upon her lap and listened. A lantern flickered along the bank. There was a sound of voices.—"Good-night, old boy!" and then another good-night and a laugh. And then Livingston's voice in the passage giving some order to a

servant. Livingston was gifted with a very peculiar voice, extremely low and sweet for a man, and singularly imperative withal.

Miss Hamlyn started and turned pale. She took up her book again and held it between her face and the light. She was sitting with her back to the door.

He came in, his hands in his pockets, a cigar in his mouth. "What! up still? By Jove, this is dissipation for you, Mr. Hamlyn. I thought every one would have turned in long ago?" He went over to the window and threw away his cigar. "A fine night out. Ibrahim says the men will be ready to go on in about another half hour." He turned his face towards Bell but without looking at her: "Don't let me interrupt your reading, Miss Hamlyn?" he said.

"Yes, go on, child; don't stop yet."

"I don't know where I left off, papa. I've lost the place."

"Oh, begin anywhere. It's all good. What's your favorite part of Byron, Livingston?"

"If Miss Hamlyn will allow me, I will leave it to her selection."

He threw his hat down on the table and took a chair near Mr. Hamlyn's sofa; shading his eyes with his hand.

Bell turned over the leaves of the book, hurriedly, confusedly, not knowing what she was looking for. She felt Arthur's eyes upon her; the consciousness of his presence thrilled through every nerve and fibre of her being. The color came and went in her cheeks — "Well, why don't you go on?" her father urged.

She began at once; it was the first page which lay open before her.

"Every feeling has been shaken;
Pride, which not a world could bow,
Bows to thee — by thee forsaken
Even my soul forsakes me now.
But 'tis done — all words are idle — "

Her voice faltered and broke down. She closed her book ; she got up from her seat. "I — Excuse me, papa, but I cannot read any more to-night. I'm tired. I've — I've got a headache." She stooped and touched her father's forehead with her lips. "Good-night," she said.

Livingston went to the door and drew back the curtain for her to pass. As she got near him she put out her hand, without lifting her eyes. He made no motion to take it. She waited a moment, then her arm dropped to her side. She passed him without a word.

Mrs. Hamlyn was in her own room, putting away some dresses in a trunk. "I'm not sleepy. Let me come in and talk to you a while?" said Bell. She sat down at the foot of the bed and began loosening and unfastening her long soft hair.

"What are you doing there, Flossy?" she asked.

Mrs. Hamlyn unfolded one dress after the other, holding each one critically up against the light. "It has been ruinous! simply ruinous! I'm sure I don't know what we are going to do until we reach Cairo," she said, despondently, shaking her head. "Every thing seems to have given out at once. We have come to the end of every thing."

"Yes. To the end," said Bell.

She sat there until Mrs. Hamlyn had finished her task ; until all the lights had been put out in the saloon. The boat started again ; they heard the splash of the water, the creak of the rudder, the monotonous chant of the men at the oars.

"Do go to bed, child ; it is so very late. You look quite pale for want of sleep," said Mrs. Hamlyn.

Bell went to her room. Generally she slept with her window open ; to-night she left the light burning, the curtain drawn. Presently she heard voices again ; she recognized her father's laugh, a good-night, the opening and shutting of doors ; — then Livingston's step crossing the deck overhead.

For a while she lay perfectly motionless, staring straight at the light, grasping her pillow tightly with both hands, trying to concentrate all her attention on the regular rhythmic beat of the oars. A low cry; the muffled thud of the rowlock; a long, wavering note; the splash of the oar-blade striking the water; then a pause; then the chorus breaking out again with the same muffled stroke;—she fixed her mind upon it until her brain seemed beating in unison with the sound. And in a little while she fell asleep.

It was three o'clock in the morning when Miss Hamlyn awoke. Her candle had burned down to its socket; and the flaring wick cast long black shadows against the wall. She started up and listened eagerly. The oars were still; the boat motionless. She drew her curtain and looked out. The dahabeah was moored fast against the bank; they were again at Luxor. She drew back hastily;—the light flickered and went out. She was left alone; alone with the stillness, with the night.

And then, calling to her like a voice from out that darkness,—looking at her with accusing eyes from out that night,—came the remembrance of Arthur, the remembrance of all she had lost. She started up, trembling, panting, shivering like a creature pursued. She covered her face; she pressed her hands wildly before her eyes; holding her breath; crouching down; trying to hide herself, to forget, to escape.

It had all been so quiet, so simple; a few trenchant words; a gesture of avoidance; the turn of a head;—and all was over, ended; it was as though it had not been.

She laughed; she put her hand up to her head. “It is impossible!” she said aloud, and her voice sounded strangely to her in the silence, and she knew that it was true.

“Utterly false.”—“I trusted you and you deceived me.”—“As for Ferris, I pity Ferris.”—The words came back and stung her, came back and stabbed her, so

that she shrank from them, breathing hard as in fierce physical pain. Again she drew her curtain and looked out. The serene beauty of the night seemed pitiless and cold ; the chill wind of morning made her shiver ; already a dull gray streak at the horizon heralded the day, — that new day to be lived through without love, without hope, without Arthur. Through the darkness she heard the low voice of the mighty river hurrying downward to the sea. "Arthur ! — my love ! — Arthur !" she said imploringly. She stretched her hands out into the darkness, — "Arthur ! "

The night and the silence enveloped her, and there was no comfort in them. Peace, stillness, mystery, were all about her ; a mad storm of regret, of passionate remorse, of hopeless longing, raged within. She leaned her head against the casement ; she remembered Alice ; she listened to the river. A mightier flood of sorrow, a more relentless rush of bitter waters was pouring across her stricken soul.

CHAPTER XVIII.

HOW THEY MET.

"Are these things then necessities ?
Then let us meet them like necessities."
Henry IV.

IT was morning — the morning of their second day at Thebes.

She sat upon the deck watching a native funeral pass along the bank. Some twenty men, clad for the most part in brown robes ; a dozen or more blue-veiled women, followed the gaunt white camel bearing a rude framework of ropes and wood. There, covered over with coarse brown sacking, the body lay.

At the river's brink the camel knelt down in the sand. One could almost have imagined this poor beast was conscious of the meaning of this, the last journey its master was ever to make. It twisted its long neck from side to side ; it beat its hideous head upon the ground ; it cried, it called, it struggled.

She looked at it remembering what Livingston had once said,—that the moaning of a camel was like the attempt of a deaf and dumb person to express some overwhelming grief. For there is an impotent rage in the camel's voice unlike the cry of any other animal. The creature seems in open revolt, struggling against that nature which has denied it speech.

Two small sail-boats had been fastened since early morning to the dahabeah's stern. The men placed the body in one of these ; the wailing women grouped themselves about it ; the men shook out the tattered scanty sails. Half-a-dozen of the *Princess'* sailors who had sauntered down to watch the embarkation came slowly back, laughing and talking in the sunshine ; the naked brown-skinned little boys shaded their eyes with their hands for one more look at the boat before they went back to their play ; a man took the moaning camel by the halter and led him slowly back into the town.

No one seemed more struck or saddened by the sight of death than by the fleet passing of some summer cloud. Death seems so natural to the Egyptian fellahs ; such a calm and simple act ;—a mere folding of hands that have worked without reward and are weary ; a closing of eyes that have seen but little joy in life, of eyes that are willing to sleep. It is the last familiar crossing of the river,—but not to the daily task, never any more to the hot and hopeless toiling for unknown dreaded tyrants ; it is indeed the passing of the Nile, but the passing into the cool still shadow, the inheritance of all the possibilities of Death.

They have carried the body across the river, the girl thought ; they are going to bury it there, out on that rocky hillside whose very earth is the dust of kings.

The little procession will wind slowly through the spring fields, past the two Colossi for ever watching in serene silence for the coming of the dead ; and there they will leave him, asleep in the morning sunshine, — one more gone over to the silent majority.

She was still leaning over the railing, looking wistfully across at the opposite shore, when Mrs. Hamlyn joined her on deck. — And how was Bell's neuralgia ? Did she not feel any better yet ? she asked affectionately.

“ No. Just the same.”

“ How very odd ! I never heard of neuralgia lasting so long before. By the way, Mrs. Campbell sent here this morning before you were awake to ask how you were.”

“ She is very kind.”

A silence. Mrs. Hamlyn walked slowly up and down the deck humming a tune between her teeth.

“ How the chickens have gone ! ” she said suddenly, stopping before one of the coops and looking in with a meditative air ; “ And there are hardly any turkeys left. Ibrahim will have to buy some more. It is wonderful how well he has provided for us all this time. It is wonderful how little trouble we have had. It is altogether wonderful what a pleasant winter it was. I'm sure I can't feel thankful enough when I remember how contented and peaceful your father has been. It was such a rest.”

“ Poor Flossy ! You do have a hard time of it sometimes, don't you ? ” said Bell caressingly. She put her hand upon her stepmother's shoulder and held her still while she smoothed out the ribbon at her throat.

“ I tremble to think what will become of us now Mr. Livingston has gone,” Mrs. Hamlyn continued, glancing down ; “ I never knew your father to take such a fancy to any one before. And I must say I did hope — Well ! It's very odd. I thought you liked Mr. Livingston so much.”

“ Yes. I liked him.”

“ Well, but it's very odd. What do you suppose

made him in such a hurry to join the Merediths again, then? He seemed to enjoy being with us, you know."

"The Merediths are old friends of his, Flossy; and we are — acquaintances."

"And yet —"

"I see Mr. Meredith and that Englishman, Tom Campbell's friend — the man with the yacht, don't you know? They are coming here, I think," said Miss Hamlyn, hastily.

It was now two days since she had seen Livingston. Something — perhaps a doubt of her own power of endurance, perhaps merely the desire of submitting her own will to his, of sacrificing something of her own happiness to his comfort — had caused her to avoid meeting him, to avoid bidding him good-by. And to suffer without word or sign was still something to be done for Arthur. Her very silence was a link between them, — a tacit understanding to which she clung instinctively, knowing it to be the last, perhaps the strongest appeal yet left for her to make. And somehow the days passed by. The long empty mornings wore away; people came and went, and came again; the commonplace of life flowed smoothly all about her, and still for his sake she was silent and endured.

Luxor was very full just then. Beside the usual crowd of dahabeahs and native boats, two steamers were in, and a third one was expected that night. Rumors of a very high personage travelling in the strictest incognito, and with the largest of suites, had come flying up the river to fire the ambition, and latent — very latent — patriotism of the little band of Egyptians representing Europe in the different consular houses. His Highness's arrival could be expected at any moment, and already a broad flight of steps was cut out in the soft mud of the bank; lamps and torches were being prepared for the illumination; flags were fluttering all over the place, and Luxor was *en fête* for the event.

Towards evening the fitful sound of a drum seemed to determine the direction of a hundred hastening feet. Groups of natives hurried along the shore; excited dragomen went and came in search of missing howadji; a crowd of men and women and brown-skinned children,—a silent picturesque crowd, a crowd dignified in its rags and beautiful in its nakedness,—thronged the bank. For there was to be a rare display of horsemanship that night. The Prince was to be welcomed to Luxor with all the pomp and circumstance of an Arabian fantasia.

Between the English consulate — once the old temple of Luxor with its double rows of columns and wide steps — and the river there is a large unoccupied plot of ground. It was here that the riding began, a group of horsemen galloping around, wheeling their horses sharply about, brandishing long guns above their heads and pursuing each other to the accompaniment of a loud barbaric music clashed out by the row of musicians sitting on the old temple steps.

The sun was setting as Bell joined the line of spectators. A warm red glow rested on the ancient walls, transfiguring the modern misery of the squalid town, and hiding the riders in a cloud of golden dust. There was a row of chairs placed against the side of a house, the seats of honor for the consuls and the European guests. She looked rapidly down the long line of faces glowing in the radiance of the setting sun. Livingston was not among them.

“Where will you sit? Are you looking for any one in particular?” her companion asked.

“I don’t see Gerty — Miss Campbell, I mean. Do you know if —” Mr. Alston laughed meaningly.

“Somers went over there directly after lunch to see if Miss Campbell was coming here to-night. It is six o’clock now. He will probably be able to tell us what she has decided before long. I see Mrs. Meredith over yonder. Shall I get you a chair near Mrs. Meredith, Miss Hamlyn?”

And presently Blake came up and joined them.
"Why don't the others come? Have you seen Gerty?"

Captain Blake turned rather red in the face. "I don't know," he answered stiffly. Then after a moment's pause he got up and walked away.

Mr. Alston laughed again. He was a big good-natured man, much addicted to laughter. Life always impressed him as a thing at once peculiarly and providentially adapted to suit his own tastes and as a capital joke on all his fellow men. There was no allowance made in his creed for men who failed to appreciate his pleasantry. He called that "having no sense of humor."

"That was rather an unkind cut on your part, though a very effectual one, I must say," he remarked lazily.

"I can assure you I don't know what you mean," said Miss Hamlyn, looking up at him with an air of surprise; "I do not understand—"

"I dare say not. Women never *can* understand anything, unless they know nothing about it," Mr. Alston rejoined, with easy superiority. The consciousness of having originated something epigrammatic at least in form filled him with benevolent satisfaction with every thing and every one around him. "The beggars don't ride so badly, after all, considering what a wretched set of screws they have for horses," he said affably. "Do you ride, Miss Hamlyn? You ought to ride. You've got just the right kind of a figure for a side-saddle, you know. I remember I noticed how well you held yourself the very first time I ever saw you."

"Exactly two days ago. You do not expect to be congratulated on your remarkable memory I hope, Mr. Alston?"

"No, but, really now, it's a fact, you know. I spoke of it to Somers at the time. And two days in Egypt with nothing going on;—why you get more spare time here in a day than you do in a month at home."

"Yes ; the last two days have been long enough, Heaven knows!" said Bell, with an involuntary sigh.

"That is not kind. Do you want me to believe the days seem longer since I came?"

"I do not know. I am not sure," she answered absently. She was thinking of what those two days had brought to her.

"Thank you! I am to conclude you mean so then?" He spoke out loud, straightening himself up with a start ; his voice was full of the incredulous pique of an affronted schoolboy.

Miss Hamlyn looked up at him with surprise.

"Am I saying stupid things again?" she asked. "First it was to poor Captain Blake, and now — have I been saying any thing awfully rude to you? I'm so sorry, but it's all the fault of my poor head." She put her hand up to her forehead with a smile. "It makes me stupid as you see. But you will forgive me, won't you?"

It was growing dusk ; she had to lean forward a little to see his face through the twilight. "Come now, don't be revengeful, Mr. Alston," she said, looking up at him with a persuasive smile.

Arthur Livingston coming up close behind them could see the action though he could not hear the words.

"Good God, what a flirt that girl is!" he thought to himself bitterly ; and then he laughed. "What a damned fool I am!" he said aloud. Tom Campbell turned around and stared at him. "Go on, my boy. Open confession is good for the soul," he said gravely.

"Of course you are the best judge of it, and I wouldn't contradict you for the world, but I thought folly was latent with you as a general thing, Livingston," Meredith added. "There is my wife beckoning to us, — why, by Jove, if there isn't Miss Hamlyn!"

He went forward and shook hands with Bell. "I'm delighted to see you out again," he said cordially.

His presence served to steady her nerves for the moment. She smiled and made some slight welcoming

answer. Arthur was close beside her, speaking to Mrs. Meredith. She could have put out her hand and touched him where he stood. It was the first time she had seen him since that silent parting on the boat. They were so near together it was impossible he should not speak. She sat waiting ; her hands were trembling and quite cold.

Mr. Alston leaned forward and said something.

“ I beg your pardon. I did not hear — ”

“ Why, how is this? Miss Hamlyn well and out again? How do you do, Miss Hamlyn? all right now, I hope? Livingston, have you seen Miss Hamlyn? Did you know she was all right again? ” said Campbell, coming up. Arthur turned his head ; some sudden impulse made Bell speak.

“ I — oh, yes ; we have seen each other before, ” she said hurriedly.

Arthur bowed. She met his eyes looking at her gravely, coldly ; as he would have looked at a stranger.

“ I never doubted Miss Hamlyn’s speedy recovery, ” he answered slowly. He turned away again and stepped back behind the line of chairs. Tom Campbell took his place ; and Mr. Alston and himself began criticising the horsemen as they circled by.

Meanwhile the twilight deepened. One could no longer distinguish the little puffs of fine white sand which had until now marked the gallop of the horses across the plain. The faces of the riders grew indistinct ; with the falling darkness the music rose higher, grew shriller, wilder ; instinct with savage swing and rhythm.

“ Look there, Livingston! Look at that fellow as he passes. Quick! ” said Campbell suddenly.

Arthur leaned forward ; his foot slipped on the shifting ground ; he put out his hand and caught hold of the back of a chair. He did not lose his balance, but his arm brushed against Miss Hamlyn’s shoulder. “ I beg your pardon, ” he said, drawing back. He turned around and went on talking to Mrs. Meredith. But he did not

take his hand away again. She could just feel the touch of his fingers on the back of her chair.

There is nothing so absolutely convincing as the touch of the being we love. To the girl sitting there it meant every thing,—forgiveness, peace, a possible reawakening of his old affection. For the first time since he had turned away and left her that evening by the river, his words struck her as not necessarily final ; his decision as not necessarily irrevocable. There could be change ; there was the possibility of change. She sat very still, breathing softly, her hands lightly clasped upon her lap. A hundred new hopes had started up within the last few moments. It had never occurred to her to defend her own conduct before this ; no palliation of it had seemed possible standing there before him, held at a distance by his averted face, by the indignant protest of his words. Livingston had condemned her unheard, and she had accepted his sentence as one accepts the great unquestionable facts of life,—daylight, heat and cold, or the darkness which follows the setting sun.

Hitherto every thing had seemed so utterly at an end between them, there had been no room for thought of personal appeal. After long delay, after suffering, after hesitation, she had put in words the secret of her life,—and suddenly the rôles were changed ; it was no longer she who ruled over her own existence, but another. All the careful little reservations, the petty distinctions, the thousand minute threads of circumstance she had woven about her life were torn away. She found herself initiated into a new moral world, a world in which good and evil were distinct and opposite forces ; where things not absolutely true were false ; a world in which nice shades of conduct, delicate gradations in the scale of honesty were of less than no avail.

Hitherto Miss Hamlyn's conscience had been a mere dormant possibility ; a feminine conscience unawakened to large results, drugged and blunted by the myriad small deceptions inevitable to a woman dependent on a man she does not reverence. Yet,

for a woman, she was truthful,—truthful instinctively, because she was proud. But instincts have a way of yielding, of adapting themselves to circumstance, not always counted on by those to whom they are a law.

There had been a magnanimous self-sacrifice, a desire of protecting her stepmother's weakness at the bottom of Miss Hamlyn's first concealment. The recollection of the generous impulse with which she started had blinded her from the first to all the significance of what she had done. She was realizing now for the first time that facts are paramount in life; that consequences count for more than intentions; that actions are weighed and judged by their results.

Hitherto right and wrong to her were abstract theological definitions;—words like duty or remorse; words which people used as signs, symbols expressive of large thoughts, but indefinite and vague, and not to be taken in a literal sense; something far off and remote from the every-day interests of her own life, like politics or astronomy.

She had been going through life like a person crossing a vast plain with eyes fixed on the ground. Every detail of the path had been familiar to her, but some one had bid her look around and suddenly she had become aware of illimitable space. Existence had widened about her. Hitherto she had only thought of the feasibility of her actions; she began to understand their consequences, and vaguely, dimly to recognize the responsibility they implied.

But as yet her moral sense was still unawakened to any thing higher than Arthur's will or Arthur's disapproval. To be judged, to be condemned even, by the code of his likes and dislikes,—his tastes and his antipathies,—seemed perfectly natural to her. She understood that he should resent her deceit as something implying lack of confidence in him. If Livingston refused to be reconciled with her because he was angry, because he no longer felt any trust in her protestations, she would

understand it still. But abstract justice was a word which had no meaning for Bell. It is not while the fulness of youth is tingling through us, — not while the sense of individuality is still a new, a delightful, fact, — that one is ready to accept and submit to impartial impersonal judgment. Leaning back there, thrilling through every fibre at the warm light contact of her lover's hand, the question between Arthur and herself was a purely personal question to Bell Hamlyn. If Ferris had to be sacrificed she was sorry, very sorry, but sorry more for Arthur's sake than for either Ferris's or her own. But all that was in the past, or was not yet. In the present there was Arthur, — Arthur close beside her, his hand on the back of her chair; — and she loved him.

Mr. Alston, turning to speak to her, was struck by the tender impassioned expression of Miss Hamlyn's face. She sat quite still, looking straight out before her, seeing as in a dream the rush of the river, the swaying crowd, the fantastic flitting figures of the horsemen galloping by.

Meanwhile the night had fallen. The last pale red streak faded slowly away at the horizon; a star shone above the gleaming river, floating white and large in a primrose-colored sky. A row of flaring pitch torches had been lit for the prince's arrival by the landing-place, under the fluttering flags. The flames leaped and tossed in the wind showering a rain of fire all about them; and here and there the lamps of the illumination began shining through the tender gray twilight.

There was a feeling of spring in the look of things, and yet the wind was chilly. Involuntarily Bell shivered as it blew over her.

"You are cold. Let me get you your cloak. Excuse me, Mr. Livingston, but your arm is on Miss Hamlyn's cloak. — How could you be so imprudent? why did you not tell me you wanted this before?" said Alston quickly, and wrapped her shawl about her with ostentatious care.

The charm was broken. At his first word Livingston had started and drawn back with some muttered word of apology. And presently he turned and walked off with Meredith.

Bell watched the two figures crossing the plain and melting away into the creeping river mist. "It is cold," she said, shivering. "Cold and late. Shall we not go home?"

That night, and again in honor of the illustrious visitor, there was a dance of ghawazee girls at one of the Consulates. There were some five or six girls beside the musicians. They danced in a long narrow strip of a room furnished with a file of stiff chairs, and on the floor a heap of Persian rugs. A general invitation had been sent out to all the boats. By nine o'clock the room was almost full of expectant strangers clad in every variety of travelling and evening dress.

"Put not your trust in princes," Miss Hamlyn quoted, an hour later, when, a messenger having at last arrived bearing His Highness's regrets, the dancing was allowed to begin. "Mr. Alston, oblige me by looking at the face of that lady over there in the corner,—I mean the one with the seven flounces on her dress? You may believe it, or not, but I saw those flounces *wilt* when she heard the news! Her husband looks as though he was going to shed tears over the wasted glory of that dress coat. Fancy coming up the Nile provided with shiny boots and a dress coat! It is different with you, you are only up here for a few days, and have not had time to get acclimated, but those people have been up the river all winter. Those flounces must have been premeditated at least three months ago."

"Do you know who they are?"

"We met them once before. Up in Nubia; a horrible blowy day. They were going down, or they would have been going if their dahabeah had not been stuck on a sand-bank. First their dragoman came over to us with his master's compliments and did we know any news? Papa sent him some old papers we had, and

afterwards we met him on the bank. As soon as he saw us he joined us, and I remember he talked a great deal, but there seemed to be something on his mind he could not say. At last, just as we were getting back in the boat, he stopped us. Papa asked him if there was any thing we could do for him? I never shall forget his face. He looked up the river at the driving clouds and down the river at the driving sand, and then he looked at us, 'It's very fine, of course—very fine! I've been planning to come for years, and I would not have missed it for the world; but—but don't you think it is a very *long* river?' he said. You never heard any thing more melancholy in your life."

Alston laughed.

"Poor fellow! I wonder if he is not the same man we heard of in Cairo who held divine service and invited everybody to a thanksgiving dinner at Wady Halfeh to celebrate his having 'reached the Second Cataract and, under Providence, taken the turn'? There is not what you might call an excess of beauty here to-night, Miss Hamlyn," he added, glancing up and down the room, "or rather—the beauty seems to be concentrated in one spot."

"Can't you imagine all the other women quoting

'Out, damned spot,
Out, I say . . . ?'

Really, Mr. Alston, I beg your pardon, but please don't look so horrified. That is not swearing, it is Shakespeare. Beside—Oh, there is some one else I know? If you look in that corner you will see some great favorites of mine."

"In which corner?"

"Over there by the door. Those two young men over there, with the purple knickerbockers and the extraordinary red hair. The eldest one we call Rosso Antico, and his friend is the Scarlet Runner. We met them first up at Philæ. They had come there 'for exercise' they said. They seem to have come up the Nile generally

for a walk. Mr.—some one told me he saw them in Cairo carrying alpenstocks, and I believe it."

"I've seen tourists carrying alpenstocks in Venice quite often. There was one man at an hotel there,—a German, who had just been elected a member of the Alpen Verein,—he always went about town in a plaid suit all over straps and buckles, carrying an ice-axe. Generally he took one of his gondoliers with him to mount guard over it when he had to leave it at the door of some church."

Miss Hamlyn laughed. She was in that feverish state of restrained excitement when any thing is tolerable, except waiting.

"Tell me something more. What do you think of those girls over there?" she said presently, nodding over at the dancers, "do you think they are pretty? Why don't you look at them then?"

"I've been under the impression all the evening that I *was* looking at a pretty girl."

"I hate compliments," she said abruptly; "particularly when—"

"When what?"

"Oh,—nothing. You should have seen the ghawazee we saw once," she went on with a sudden change of voice; "such dancing! This is nothing compared to it."

"That was at Esneh, of course?"

"No; Esneh was a failure. The girls there were not pretty and wore atrocious English prints. It's the only place in the East where I've seen magenta colored stuffs. Generally every color is so perfectly true here, but at Esneh they wear magenta;—that alone would be enough to classify the place; for magenta is the symbol of every thing which is common and false and bad. But the dancing I spoke of took place a long way off. It was long, long ago."

She spoke slowly, softly, with flushing cheeks. She remembered that first evening she had ever spent with Arthur; she remembered her first impression of him; his words, his face, the sound of his voice—

"How well that flirtation seems prospering over there? It is quite amusing to watch them. Mr. Alston seems quite devoted, doesn't he? Sir Frederick says he admires Bell immensely," said Gerty Campbell confidentially; and Livingston's glance followed hers across the room. "I believe in elective affinities, you know, Mr. Livingston."

"Yes? I thought women generally believed in eclectic ones?"

He looked critically at Bell, at her flushed cheeks, her quick tremulous smile, the restless movement of her hands. He noticed every detail of her dress,—it was a dress he had once admired,—even to the ribbon in her hair, the bunch of pale fragrant bean-flowers at her throat.

"Miss Hamlyn has an enviable facility for finding amusement wherever she goes," he remarked quietly. He thought of the note which he had received an hour before, a mere line: "*We leave to-morrow. I must see you before we leave.*" And he hesitated whether he should go.

The different consulates at Thebes are all built very much after the same fashion; terraced houses with bare white-washed rooms opening out at every side on narrow passages and narrow stairs leading abruptly down the terraces to the river.

That night there was a moment of confusion as the crowd poured out, and Miss Hamlyn found herself alone for a moment with no one she knew within sight except Meredith.

"Don't wait for me. I have left my shawl. Mr. Alston has gone back for it," she explained.

"All right, I must go on and rescue Margaret. But here is Livingston; he will take care of you," said Meredith, hurriedly walking on.

The two left behind followed him without a word. The night was very dark, the bank broken and steep. "You had better take my arm," said Livingston.

She took it, still in silence. It was like a dream, this

sudden change from the crowded room, the faces, the voices, the clanging discords of sound, to the cool outer darkness, — this still world, silent, yet full of the vague murmurings of the river's voice. And she was here with Arthur.

Some one carrying a lantern hastened by. The flash of light seemed to awaken her as from a trance. She started ; she clasped both hands upon his arm ; she looked up in his face. "Arthur," she said.

Some one else passed them ; stopped ; hesitated a moment and then turned back.

"Is that you, Miss Hamlyn ? I have been looking for you everywhere," said Alston breathlessly.

No one answered. They walked on together for a few yards, and then —

"You got my note ?" said Miss Hamlyn abruptly, turning to Livingston.

"Yes."

"And I may expect — ?"

He was silent a moment.

"I will be there," he said at last in a reluctant voice.

The path turned, — went down. They had reached the long line of lighted dahabcahs. Some one said good-night to them as they passed. Then a voice called out for "Alston." He stopped. "I will see you to-morrow morning then," he said, and shook hands.

The next boat was the *Princess*. Arthur offered Bell his hand to help her down the bank. Her hand was very cold and trembled. She crossed half way across the plank between the boat and shore. Then she stood still and spoke.

"Mr. Livingston."

He turned quickly back and waited.

"Can you — will you — " She put out her hand and leaned heavily against the railing. There was a moment's silence. By the light of the lantern he could see her face. It was deathly pale ; her very lips had turned white ; it was as the face of some one dead ; all

the life seemed concentrated in her large sorrowful eyes. She looked at him fixedly, imploringly. Her lips moved and she whispered something. Was it his name? He hesitated; half put out his hand; he came a step nearer. "I shall see you to-morrow," he said abruptly. He lifted his hat and walked away without looking back.

Presently he met Meredith, who was waiting for him. The two men walked on together without a word.

There is a place behind the temple of Luxor where the river takes a turn; where there is a grove of palm-trees, and the white dome of a sheikh's tomb which glimmers vaguely through the darkness. It is a quiet spot, picturesque and away from the noise and traffic of the bank. In the daytime you are sure to see some blue veil floating between the trees, and find some English girl with a box of water colors "doing" the tomb and the palms; but at night it is quite deserted and perfectly still.

"Is there any thing the matter, Arthur?" asked Meredith after a while. He was sitting on the trunk of a fallen palm, smoking. Livingston was some paces off, standing with his back to him, staring out into the night.

Livingston did not answer.

"Is any thing going wrong with you?" he asked again.

"Yes."

"Any thing that I can — "

"No."

He answered without turning round: in a dull, monotonous voice.

Meredith went on smoking silently.

"I'm sorry you are out of sorts to-night," he said presently, after some moments' hesitation, "There was something I was going to ask you about. In fact I was going to tell you a story."

"Go on."

"What can Miss Hamlyn know about poor Alice Mason, Arthur?"

Livingston started. He looked sharply round, but

he could distinguish nothing in the darkness ; he could only see the red spot made by Meredith's cigar.

"Why do you ask ?" He came nearer and threw himself down on the sand at Meredith's feet. "She has heard me speak of Alice," he said.

"Ah, that explains. I could not imagine how— You know that likeness Margaret has of Alice ?"

Livingston nodded.

"One of those old-fashioned daguerreotype things ? Well, we were talking about photographs last night,— you were not there, you remember,— and Margaret was speaking of the way those old likenesses faded, and brought out this one to prove her point. It was left on the table and no one thought any thing more about it. But this morning, when Miss Hamlyn was over at our place, Margaret came into the room suddenly and found her looking at that picture. She put it down at once, and she spoke of something else, but Margaret says she is perfectly certain that Miss Hamlyn was crying."

Silence.

"Curious, wasn't it ?"

"Very. But women *are* curious creatures," said Livingston drily.

Looking at him through the darkness he seemed to see again two pleading passionate eyes,— two eyes which followed him, which met his glance whichever way he looked. He put his hand up to his face impatiently, as though to hide them from his sight.

"Miss Campbell and Miss Hamlyn are very great friends, are they not ?" Meredith asked, after another pause.

"You know my opinion of a woman's friendship. For three months it is intimate, and for the rest of life only intermittent. But I believe they are friends,— as friends go."

"Friends enough at all events to be tolerably confidential with each other ?"

"Oh, friends enough for that, certainly. Why ?"

"Merely because—" He hesitated. "The fact is, the fair Gertrude was talking to Margaret about Miss Hamlyn, lately," he said slowly, "and—I was curious to know if she got her version of events from headquarters or not? That's all."

Livingston did not answer. Presently he said in a very quiet voice.

"Meredith, you remember that walk we took together, you and I, nearly two months ago, at Assuan."

"Well!"

"You remember the advice you were kind enough to give me about marrying and all that?"

"Perfectly."

"Very well, my dear boy, if you still remember your own eloquence on that occasion you will not be surprised to hear of the effect it had." He hesitated a moment. "It's about a month ago now since I asked Miss Hamlyn to marry me," he said.

Mr. Meredith broke out into a long whistle of astonishment.

"By Jove! you don't mean it? It isn't possible that girl actually—"

"Refused me? Well, I am not engaged to her certainly," said Livingston, speaking deliberately. "The reason— We two are very old friends, Fred; but not even to an old friend can you expect a man to go into details about a failure like mine."

He got up and walked away a few paces, and then came back. He stopped directly in front of Meredith.

"Understand me," he said gravely, "I haven't any wish to make common talk of this, as you may imagine. But I don't intend that either you or Margaret should get mistaken ideas about Miss Hamlyn in your heads. I do not intend— If you hear any thing more about this, just see that the story does not get misrepresented, Fred, will you? I won't have her talked about, you understand."

Meredith nodded. "I'll see to it. You know without my telling you so if it's likely that I'm sorry, old fellow?"

"All right. I understand. And now, have you got another cigar, Meredith? Let's have it then. Why, hallo! that isn't bad, for Egypt, is it?"

"It is one Somers gave me. By the way, have you seen the happy Somers yet?"

"Met him this afternoon. He was taking his walk abroad in a perfect family group—fiancéé, future cousin, prospective mother-in-law and all. I asked the mother-in-law *en herbe* what she thought of the weather, and she told me—'Sir Frederick thinks it is very fine.' That is what you call family harmony, you know."

"I hope it won't prove too much for Mrs. Campbell," Meredith remarked; "but really that title is a strain. Why even old Tom looks elated; and as for Campbell senior, I saw him under his awning to-day, and he made me think of Abraham sitting in the door of his tent awaiting the angel of the Lord."

Mr. Livingston laughed.

"Tell me something more about your excavations," he said; "I never heard the end of that affair about the mummy and Mariette Bey."

It was a long story, full of details and of technical explanations. Livingston leaned back against the tree, smoking quietly, listening to the dry incessant rustle of the palms. Once the wind lifted the branches asunder, and looking down at him he saw a star, a still luminous star looking at him like the mournful eyes of the night.

. . . . "on which I made an official statement of the whole affair to the Khedive, and there, for the present, the matter rests. And now, as an impartial witness and without the slightest prejudice, I should like to hear what you think of it all," Meredith concluded.

"I think," said Livingston slowly, "I think—that I am a damned fool."

Mr. Meredith stared. "I don't see,—I must say, I don't see the connection," he suggested feebly.

But Livingston did not answer. He was thinking of two eyes, two sorrowful passionate eyes; two eyes mournful and pure as the stars, which were looking at him from out the night.

CHAPTER XIX.

HOW THEY PARTED.

“She sees old loves that drifted,
She knew not why ;
Old loves and faded fears
Float down a stream that hears
The flowing of all men’s tears beneath the sky.”

“**A**ND now,” said Gerty, “shut the door, Bell, and — I’ll show you something.”

She drew off her glove as she spoke ; she held up her hand, turning it from side to side, making the diamond on her finger sparkle in the sun.

“Well, what do you think of *that!*” she asked triumphantly.

“Oh, Gerty, how lovely !”

“Isn’t it ? and such a big diamond too ! And it is my engagement ring, you know.”

“Gerty !”

“Yes, my dear. But it is a fact nevertheless. I’ve only had it since yesterday, so I really couldn’t tell you of it before. But of course you know who it is ?”

Bell hesitated.

“Then I see I shall have to introduce myself after all. My dear, if you want to look at the happiest girl in the world, look at me ; for oh, Bell, I’m going to be Lady Somers !”

She threw off her hat and laughed, and looked at Bell with radiant eyes.

“Come and sit here by me,—and first give me a kiss and wish me joy,—and I’ll tell you all about it,” she said. “You see, to begin at the very beginning, I’ve known Sir Frederick for ages. He and Tom were at Oxford together, and then his place, the Lodge, is

only about ten miles from where we live. Such a house, Bell ! You shall come and see me there by and by. Such gardens ! and such drawing-rooms ! Fred says he means to have it done up all over again for me — and I'm to choose the furniture. Wait till you see it ! I mean to have the prettiest place in the whole county. First, I'm going to — ”

“ But about Sir Frederick, Gerty ? ”

“ I'm coming to him presently. He is — You haven't seen him, have you ? ”

“ I saw some one walking on the bank with you yesterday — ”

“ A short man with whiskers, — blonde whiskers ? Well, that's Fred. I'll make him come and see you to-day, you know. You are sure to like him. But, oh, Bell, what a day yesterday was ! First, there was Fred discussing things with papa. And I was so busy, you can't imagine. I wanted awfully to come over and see you, but it was simply out of the question. And then I had to break the news to Brian, — to Captain Blake, you know — ”

“ Gerty ! ”

“ Yes, my dear. Oh, it was quite like a scene in a novel, I assure you. Brian behaved beautifully. He is quite heart-broken, you know ; but of course it is quite absurd, for what else could he expect ? He is only the third son ; he lives on what his father allows him a year, and you know what those Irish estates are worth. But he is quite heart-broken, really.”

She sighed ; she put her pretty head on one side ; she looked mournfully at her new ring.

“ I wish you had been there after dinner last night. Fred asked me to sing. I said, what shall it be ? and Captain Blake was standing by the piano, and he took up that thing we used to practise so much together, ‘ Adios, mi alma, mi vida ! ’ — that little Spanish song, don't you know ? and he stood there and looked at me while I sang. You know what lovely eyes he has got. It was awfully pathetic.”

"But, Gerty dear—"

"It was just like that girl in Owen Meredith's poem, don't you know:—

"Using the past to give pathos
To the little new song that she sings.'

I thought of that at the time. Fred says my voice is better than ever. I mean to take some more lessons the first time we go up to town."

Silence. Then Gerty looked up with a smile.

"Odd, isn't it?" she said, twisting her ring about her finger. "I'm not quite sure myself yet if it isn't all a dream. You see, I knew Fred was off somewhere in the East on Henry Alston's yacht, but where he was—and whether we should meet him—" She laughed. "Oh, Bell, if you only knew old Lady Somers,—the dowager, she will be soon,—if you only knew her and could appreciate the fun!"

"Why? Isn't she nice, Gerty? Doesn't she like you?"

"Oh, she is like any other old woman, except that she always carries a lot of keys about with her in a brown velvet bag, and thinks everybody irreligious who doesn't believe in patent medicine. And I don't think she dislikes me especially, though she always disapproves of girls. No; it isn't that. But there is some one else, a niece or a second cousin, or something, a Scotch heiress, whom she has been trying to get Fred to marry for the last six months. That is partly the reason he came away; and now,—oh won't his mother be in a nice rage? She can't help herself though; Fred is his own master. And, as for me, I'll give her just three months to fall in love with me. You will see. I never knew any one I could not get to like me yet."

She picked up her hat again and went and stood before the looking-glass.

"I really must be going now," she said.

Miss Hamlyn went up to her friend, put both hands upon her shoulders, and looked into her face.

"I do hope you will be happy, dear," she said simply. "Only, — do be careful. Don't engage yourself, — for Heaven's sake don't engage yourself to a man you don't care for, Gerty. If you don't suffer for it now, you will later, — perhaps when it is too late. And there is nothing, — nothing — nothing — that can take the place of love."

"Perhaps not, to you," said Gerty calmly; "but I am different. And beside, I never said I wasn't very fond of Fred. Of course I can get along very well without him when he isn't there, but that isn't any proof that I don't care for him when he is. And you can't judge another person's feelings by your own, Bell. It's impossible. Why, just look at the difference between you and me; — not to speak of Kate, who never was, and never will be, in the wrong in all the course of her existence. Kate 'does' her life, like a sum in simple addition, and she can demonstrate every one of the proofs. As for me, — well, I'm twenty-two; I've been out in society four years; and I've always and invariably enjoyed myself. I never take very much trouble for any thing; I *never* worry; I never do any thing very disagreeable, and I'm as happy as the day is long. Mr. Livingston told me I was selfish once. I dare say. But selfish or not, I'm happier than Kate, because Kate is merely good and contented and passive; and I'm happier than you, because — "

"Because? — "

Gerty looked at her with a new and unusual seriousness.

"I'm not going to ask you any questions, Bell," she said, in her sweet clear voice; "it is not any of my business; and besides, I haven't time. But I'm not quite so blind as you imagine, perhaps. And, in return for yours, let me give you another piece of advice. Don't care for Mr. Livingston, Bell."

Bell started. She turned very pale; she looked away. "I don't — see — why you — "

"Why I say it? Then I'll tell you why. It is because you will never care for any one a little; because you never will be contented with enough; because you will take the serious view and the desperate view and the tragic view of every thing which happens to you. And I like you, Bell, and I don't want any thing to happen. And I do not believe, — it's only my own idea, mind, — but I do not believe Mr. Livingston is capable of caring for any human being in this world the hundredth part of what he cares for — Mr. Livingston."

Silence again.

"You — you do not know him," said Miss Hamlyn, turning away.

"Well, perhaps not. And I won't say I'm not disappointed in Mr. Livingston. I took a great fancy to him at first, and I can't say he ever paid very much attention to me in return," Miss Campbell answered with infinite candor.

"Good-by, dear," she said again. She held out her hand: "good-by. I'll bring Fred to see you later in the day. Let me see, you start this afternoon, don't you?"

"Yes. Papa is so much worse we are anxious not to lose time."

"Ah; you are not likely to see much more of Mr. Livingston, then. I see my caution will be wasted. But never mind; wasted or not, it was good advice." She laughed. "Doesn't that sound like a chaperon? the very thing for a model Lady Somers!"

The two girls kissed each other good-by. At the door Gerty paused again with her hand on the lock.

"Mr. Livingston called me 'theatrical' once," she said; "I never thought of it before, but it is curious how we all seem to be playing in different parts? There is Katie, now, who goes in for — what shall I say? — proverbs, neat little parlor comedies with a moral and a good example in every act. My talent is more for melodrama, I believe, — twenty or thirty

startling tableaux, with lots of excitement and action, and nobody of any consequence killed in the end. As for you, Bell ; if you don't look out, I foresee — ”

“ What ? A tragedy, or a failure ? ” asked Miss Hamlyn, bitterly. But there is such a thing as a combination of both.

The *Princess* was to sail at five. At four o'clock Livingston was the only one of the party who had not come on board. The Merediths and the Campbells were all there ; so was Mr. Alston ; and Gerty had brought her fiance.

There were even some strangers among them, for news had gone forth that a dahabeah was leaving, — going directly down to Cairo with the shortest possible delay, — and several howadji on their way up the river had taken advantage of this opportunity of getting letters safely mailed. Among others there had come some people belonging to a party of Cook's tourists. One was an American, — a thin, sallow-complexioned man with a hungry face, dressed from head to foot in dusty black broadcloth. “ In compliment to the native costume ” he had adopted a scarlet fez ; it was possibly for the same reason that he dispensed with any shirt-collar and cuffs.

A few moments after his appearance he was followed by two especial antipathies of Miss Hamlyn's, an English lady and her daughter whom they had frequently observed sitting on the steamer's deck. They were women who gave one the impression of being clad in complete steel, — a defensive armor covered over with some dingy gray stuff. They wore broad slapping straw hats ; they wore huge crinolines, which displayed to its fullest extent the vast expanse of their feet, and the mother in particular (whom Meredith compared to an old recruiting sergeant) affected quantities of hanging chains and keys, which reminded one irresistibly of the warder of a convict prison.

And it was in the presence of such people as these that Bell and Livingston met again.

He came up the stairs and shook hands with Mrs. Hamlyn in silence. And then he looked around for Bell. She was sitting at the farther end of the deck, but the moment Livingston turned she rose and went slowly forward to meet him.

"I thought—I thought you—." She put up her handkerchief to her lips and smiled.

"I came this morning," he said hastily. "They told me you had given orders not to be disturbed."

She looked at him again and shook her head. "It was a mistake. It all seems a mistake;—doesn't it?" She spoke with a sort of apathetic resignation; the hand she gave him was chilled and listless as her voice.

"Bell!" said Mrs. Hamlyn.

"Yes."

"Won't you show Sir Frederick those photographs? The Cairene ones, you know."

She turned and walked away without a word. Livingston had never seen her dressed in black before. That day she wore a dress of some soft woollen stuff which fell about her in long unbroken folds. She was exceedingly, strikingly pale. Her white, hushed face reminded him strangely of some great magnolia flower; and then all at once he remembered the still serene smile which steals over the face of the dead, and suddenly a great distance, an unfathomable space seemed to have fallen between himself and Bell. He thought of the faith, of the hope, of all the beautiful dreams of the last months:—they were dead. He looked at Bell; she too was dead, dead like the vanished dreams. He looked away again; he saw the river flowing by, he saw the sunlight catching on a far white sail; and then again he looked at her. She seemed to him the ghost of all the possible happiness of his life. It was his youth which stood there before him, erect and stilly smiling, but white, but voiceless, but dead.

The sailors went and came; the boat was nearly

ready for the start ; and still the talk, the easy laughter, flowed on.

Livingston leaned back against the railing and waited. Waited for what ? He did not know it himself. A passionate longing for something which was not, for something lost and ended and inexpressibly dear, had taken entire possession of his will. All his power of reason, all his convictions, all his resolutions melted away from him. His own actions seemed incoherent, arbitrary, meaningless. He could recall no purpose in any thing he had done.

He stood there silent. He knew that it was a dream : he knew that never more, come what might, should he kiss those cold pale lips, should he take those cold white hands in his again. And as in a dream, a terrible silent longing filled his soul. He looked at Bell ; and all at once — like a flash of lightning tearing asunder and illumining a tempest-driven sky, — a wild conviction shot across his mind, branding itself for ever in his heart.

He looked at Bell : with cruel clearness he recalled each circumstance, each smallest detail of her deception. He thought of his own hot anger, the resentment, the indignation which had filled him, — where were they now ? Past, silent, dead, like all the rest. He looked at Bell : and he knew that he loved her.

“ I presume that you are an American, sir.”

Livingston started and looked round. Two sharp shrewd eyes met his glance and twinkled knowingly at him, while their owner smiled with all the bland self-congratulation of a Yankee who has caught a fellow creature asleep. “ Been dreaming a considerable spell. Thought it was about time to wake you up. This young lady and me,” pointing over his shoulder at Gerty, who was crossing the deck, “ we’ve talked ourselves pretty much out, I reckon.”

“ Indeed I haven’t,” said Gerty demurely ; “ Mr. — Mr. Scudder has been telling me all about America. The most interesting information ; I feel as though I

had never appreciated the inhabitants before," she said, looking at Livingston with a face brimming over with suppressed mischief.

"Yes; the old country is a great country, and no mistake. Don't you agree with me, sir? You're an American citizen yourself, I take it?"

"I am an American."

"New Yorker, perhaps?"

"I am from New York."

"Well, yes; I should have said you were a New York man, just to look at you. You don't look Boston. Those Boston chaps are like so many Englishmen in bad health; — they don't amount to much just at present, but they hope to be good strong Englishmen some day. And you don't look Connecticut. A Connecticut man is like a potato — no account till he gets his eyes peeled. I'm a Connecticut man myself; born in New Haven. You're a democrat now, I calculate?"

"I never occupy myself with politics," said Livingston hastily.

"Well, there now, that's just like a New Yorker again. It's ring or run in New York now-a-days, and so you've run up here; but you've brought your Tweed suit with you, I see. Ha, hal — always tell a New Yorker by his Tweed. Ever been a Cook's tourist?"

"Never."

"I'm up here with Cook. Queer lot; but I guess we're human beings after all. Human nature's pretty much the same everywhere — outside of California. But, speaking of Cook, heard that story about us yet? Young swell stops here on his way down; goes over to Karnak and meets a clergyman of our party. Clergyman is writing a book on Egypt and naturally is anxious to pick up some information about the Upper Nile. Tries the swell with all sorts of questions without getting much satisfaction; finally he asks him what kind of sport he had. 'Damned bad sport,' says the swell, 'no shootin' to speak of. Nothing but some crocodiles above, and some Cook's tourists below, the Cataract.

Fired at 'em both, but didn't succeed in hittin' either,—but I mean to yet,' says the swell. Ha, ha! Not bad, is it?"

"Don't look at me, Mr. Livingston, don't!" said Gerty, in an inaudible aside: "I always prophesied you would be made to repent that speech, and now your sin has found you out!"

Livingston smiled vaguely. He felt an intense desire to wring somebody's neck.

"I think I will go now," he said, with the careful amiability of a man irritated almost beyond the verge of self-control.

Mr. Scudder looked thoughtfully after him as he walked away. "Nice gentlemanly sort of man, but seems sleepy; needs waking up, I guess," he said regretfully.

Livingston had gone over to Bell. He held out his hand.

"You are going?"

She looked at him steadily for a moment, and he noticed the blue veins on her temples, the dark circles under her eyes. Then her glance fell; a slight tremor passed over her face, and then again she smiled; the same slow inscrutable smile.

He held out his hand. "Good-by," he said.

"Good-by."

Her hand just touched his and then fell to her side. From the bank he looked back and saw her again,—a tall slender figure in flowing black robes, her white face still in shadow, the level rays of the sinking sun turning to shining gold the loosened masses of her hair. It was so that he looked at her for the last time; it was so that he remembered her, that he saw her then and after, long after,—in his dreams.

She turned away; she went back to the others. Again, mechanically, she took up the burden of her life. Mrs. Hamlyn was talking to her two English visitors. The American tourist had followed Livingston down the steps.

"I think it only right to tell you we have nothing to do with that person who has just left," said the elder lady, turning to Mrs. Hamlyn. "We consider him extremely offensive. He is an American. We associate as little as possible with the American part of our company."

"Mamma!" said her daughter, speaking for the first time, and with an alarmed air, "Mamma!"

"I understand, Amelia; but there is no occasion for embarrassment. Of course you cannot well avoid knowing how objectionable many of your country people are," she added, turning to Mrs. Hamlyn with bland stolidity; "I dare say they may be very worthy people at home, but they do not do for *us*. We are accustomed to other manners in England. Not that we are not ready to make allowances. As I always tell the Americans I meet, far be it from me to be your judge; I hope I know how to distinguish, and I am always ready to make allowances."

"How—how exceedingly kind of you," said Miss Hamlyn wearily. "Flossy, I think if these ladies will excuse me, I had better go below. My head aches, and I am tired. I am very, very tired," she said.



CHAPTER XX.

DENDERAH.

"Could we be so now?
Not though all beneath Heaven's pall
Lay dead, but I and thou,
Could we be so now."—D. G. ROSSETTI.

A SOFT sirocco day. The sun was hidden behind a floating fleecy veil of thin gray clouds. The two dahabeahs were resting by the bank, and for an hour or more their occupants had been riding across

the fresh spring fields on their way to the temple of Denderah.

The waving wheat was growing luxuriantly on either side of the path, stretching — a vast undulating plain of vivid green — as far as eye could see until it seemed to melt away into the range of vaporous violet mountains encircling the far horizon. Now and then they passed some flock of big brown sheep feeding by the roadside, or saw some rusty threadbare-looking camel turned out to grass, at rest after his desert wanderings.

At one place a band of clamorous ragged children came with a sudden rush and danced around them with shrill laughing appeals for "backsheesh." Their tattered clothes fluttered wildly about them as they whirled around, darting hither and thither with the swiftness of birds on the wing to elude the clutch of the guides. They had been disturbed at their play, and one little fellow, a tall slender boy of twelve or thereabouts, had woven a thick wreath of grass and leaves to crown his pretty head, while in one hand he held a great bunch of yellow turnip blossoms, dragged up, boy-fashion, by the roots. He danced about with the wild lawless grace of a young Bacchus, waving his golden sceptre above his head, until the very spirit of the Spring seemed to animate his flying feet and shine in the great black eyes under the shadow of his blossomy crown.

But they rode on and on until they reached the heavy Roman portal of Denderah, and, leaving their donkeys to crop a mouthful of grass at the door, they entered the temple.

Denderah is one of the only two complete temples in Egypt. It has a roof, and stands to-day very much in the same condition as when it was built, some two thousand years ago. And there is an unusual, cathedral-like look in its long pillared aisles, where a dim light filters in through the small square openings high up on the hieroglyph-covered walls.

It was all so still. The Arabs clustered about the doorway talking to each other in low guttural tones, or

stretched themselves out on the temple steps and slept, while the howadji wandered about the place, exploring shadowy inner chambers where the eye, growing accustomed to the semi-darkness, was dimly conscious of half-obliterated hieroglyphs ; or gazing curiously into strange narrow openings, smelling of the damp earth, — mysterious passages winding endlessly about only to finish with a sharp turn before some baffling wall.

In one of the inner chambers Miss Hamlyn paused and let the others go on without her. For a few moments she saw the glimmering of their lights, she heard the echo of their footsteps, a confusion of voices and laughter, and then every sound died away. She blew out her candle and waited. At first every thing was dark ; then, slowly, a wan gray light came stealing in through the narrow opening overhead and crept lower down the wall until she could vaguely distinguish the proportions of the room and even trace the outline of the long shadowy procession of gods and kings.

She sat down upon a fallen fragment of stone and listened. All about her was unbroken silence, — Egyptian silence, — the silence of death. She leaned her head against the stones, — their cool, damp hardness was grateful to her touch, — and she sat there a long while motionless, scarcely thinking ; for thought shrank back stilled and deadened before the awful silence of the place. The coolness and the darkness, so unlike Egypt, soothed her and held her with a charm. She looked at the massive walls, at the long solemn procession of figures lost in the eternal twilight of the temple ; in a vague wondering way she tried to remember the spring-fresh fields through which they had come, — the fair wide landscape, the winding river, the overarch-ing sky ; but Nature seemed remote, indefinite ; — life had neither place nor significance within these everlasting walls, this eternal monument of a dead faith, of a dead race, — this Roman tribute to the dying gods, set like a grave in the dead heart of Egypt.

For the apathy born of profound discouragement had

taken possession of Bell. In her present mood both joy and sorrow seemed equally indifferent and remote ; a silent, hopeless endurance without reason or limit, the final expression of life.

But how was it that, sitting there, she began to think of George ? — of George, and of those far-off days when they had met ? How was it that there came to her a sudden vision of the Tyrol, a dream of summer fields, of pleasant mountain slopes, of deep, cool woods hushed by the melancholy burden of the restless pines ? How was it she could hear the wild joyous voice of the mountain torrents ? why if she closed her eyes could she almost see them, leaping and flashing in the sun, or gliding on, silent and amber-toned, to where the deep shadowy pools were sleeping among the rocks ? She thought of George, not remorsefully, not sadly, as of late, but of George as she had known him first in those far-off days before her life had felt the burden of his love. It is difficult not to resent, as an injustice done to ourselves, the existence of a person whom we have wronged. But now a hundred pleasant memories came crowding back to Bell, a hundred memories of those happy careless days " free from the contrast of remembered things."

For as she sat there, little by little she became aware of a low distant sound mingling unconsciously with her thoughts ; a sound so faint and so continuous it seemed rather to melt into the silence than to break it. She lifted up her head and listened, and the far-off murmur reminded her strangely of drowsy summer afternoons, when the bees are busy in the clover bloom.

She sprang up, moved by a sudden impulse of curiosity, and looked around. Grown accustomed to the darkness she now discovered a narrow doorway opening out on a passage close behind her, which she had not yet explored. She went in. A long wide staircase, whose walls were covered with figures and hieroglyphs led from the inner chapel to the outer air. Groping her way along, she reached the flat temple roof, and the mysterious humming was explained, for the air was full of wild

bees flying about in swarms or disappearing in the spaces between the stones. And there was something strangely pretty in this conversion of the abandoned temple into a hive, a sweet familiarity in this unexpected happy busy life where otherwise the silence would have made the desolation more complete. It was as though Nature had adopted the devastated shrine for her own uses, that once more "out of the strong might come forth sweetness."

At the farther end of the roof there is another small temple, dedicated to Athor; a single open room surrounded by sculptured columns. Miss Hamlyn walked over there and looked about her; she saw the fair spring landscape, the tender gray of the sky, the wide undulating plain of fresh young green; she saw the far-off river shining in the sun. She listened for a moment: there was no sound to be heard but the slumbrous murmur of the bees and the distant voices of the howadji floating up through the still afternoon.

She sat down; she drew a letter out of her pocket; she broke the seal, and this is what she read:

"Are you not mine, Bell? my love? my very own? I answer myself 'Yes' a hundred times a day: I look at your photographs, I read over your letters, and everywhere I find the answer 'Yes'; and yet . . . I am like a man who has confided his greatest treasure to another's care. I know it is safe; I am sure of it, and still . . . Do you know I dream of you constantly of late, and in my dreams I always see you the same — so pale, so cold, so sad? Why is it? What does it mean? Is any thing happening to you? are you unhappy? do you miss me? When are you coming back to me, my Bell?

"I sent you a long explanatory letter to Assuan, — you must have found it there on your return, — giving you all the details about that miserable mine. There is nothing new since then. This morning I have finally written to my father requesting him to dispose of my interest in it (such as it is, or rather, was) in any way he

likes, provided only that he *does* dispose of it and never lets me hear of it again. If you only knew the relief! The thing has been haunting me all winter; teasing me; pursuing me; getting between me and my work. I have actually avoided going to look at pictures time and time again, because not even in their presence could I banish the sense of sterile anxiety, of worrying lowering care, which has seized me as in a vice since that fatal day when I turned my back upon my own gods to make my peace with Mammon.

“But there is no success, social, political, or worldly, to be obtained by a compromise. There is no such thing as a casual triumph, and the gifts of life are not for those who endeavor but for those who endure. I seem never to have realized that as I have done to-day. Since early morning I have been celebrating my deliverance out of the hands of the Philistines by wandering from church to gallery and from palace to church, putting myself once more into relation with my old life, my true life, the only life I was ever intended to lead. I feel as though I had found myself again. And I have been everywhere — to San Marco; to the Ducal Palace; to the Belle Arte; to Sta. Maria dell' Orto; to the Giovannelli; — everywhere. I have seen the noble forms of Tintoretto's women; I have seen Titian's men, I have looked at the warm fruity face of Giorgione's Judith, until I seemed basking in the very heart of some golden sunset cloud, until I could smell the faint rose fragrance, and feel the wooing wind of the far South; and then, — for I had kept it for the last, — I went to see my picture, — my Santa Barbara, — the woman who looks like you.

“The church was very still and empty. The old custode let me in, drew the curtain and then walked away grumbling gently to himself and clanking together his ponderous bunch of keys. The old fellow knows me well; I fancy he must think me trying to discover some secret mystery in Palma Vecchio's work, I have been there so often and I have staid so long. For it is you

that I find in that picture ; I see you in the erect poise of the head, in the tender eyes, in the proud and gentle mouth, in all the sweet simple nobility of the lines. I was there a long while this afternoon. The church grew dark ; one after the other the last old women got off their knees and shuffled slowly to the door, and still I lingered on. I could not leave you. You have never seemed more near, more dear to me, than you have been to-day.

“ I staid there as a lover ; but when I came out, — when I had crossed the bridge, when I saw the wide shining stretch of the lagune and the dim white sails far out against the rosy paleness of the sky, then I knew that I was an artist. An artist and free ! Thank Heaven, I have done with business and business cares for ever and a day ! And I was so happy, Bell, — so full of the beautiful sunset, of the beautiful woman I had just left, so full of all sweet, all beautiful, thoughts of you, that I could not, — I cannot even now — find place in my heart for a regret. And yet (if my other letter reached you you know it already) I have lost every thing I had. As the world goes I am wellnigh a ruined man ; — is it because of Santa Barbara’s smile that to myself I seem richer than I have ever been, to-night ? And yet, distasteful as was the work, need I tell you how faithfully I have labored to accomplish my end ? I was working for you, for our future ; need I tell you that I have done my uttermost — and failed ? But only failed in that. Of my future position as an artist I am sure. It may not come for years, but sometime it will surely come. Where I have failed is in what I ought never to have undertaken — no, not even with the hope of conciliating your father. I have made a mistake and I have paid for it. But I have made an effort as well, and now, — now I want my reward.

“ My Bell, listen to me. Try and think that I am talking to you ; put your sweet hands in mine and listen : — we must get married, Bell. I have been thinking of our situation carefully, constantly, for the last

three months, and this is my conclusion :— we must get married at once. It is impossible,— if you reflect you will see it yourself,— that things should remain in their present condition any longer. It is only the peculiar position in which you have been placed, this long journey out of the world, as it were, which has made them endurable, even necessary, for so long. But now you are coming back ; this letter will reach you somewhere near Thebes, I fancy ; in a few weeks you will be in Cairo. You must feel yourself how imperative it is we should come to some definite conclusion. As far as Mr. Hamlyn is concerned I can expect absolutely nothing. You have often spoken to me of the curious dislike he has of my father and his consequent prejudice against myself. And my last chance of finding favor in his eyes is now buried some hundred feet below the surface of the ground, sunk at the very bottom of the shaft of that Nevada mine. That your father would ever forgive me for being George Ferris is uncertain ; that he would forgive me for being an artist improbable ; but that he would ever forgive me for having attempted an unsuccessful speculation is a simple impossibility. That being out of the question whom have we to consider next ? Mrs. Hamlyn ? But I cannot help thinking we have already sacrificed enough for the sake of Mrs. Hamlyn's peace of mind. I know how generously you have always tried to shield her from the blame of having allowed us to know each other ; but, since some day your father must inevitably hear all about it, why not tell it to him now ? and why not by our immediate marriage efface all recollection of such a minor transgression as that of our having presumed to love each other ?

“ You will notice that I have said nothing of the sacrifice I am asking you to make. Am I selfish in this ? I think not. When I first knew you and loved you, what were you to me ? The girl I loved and nothing more. When I discovered that you were an heiress as well, it was already too late, I had already spoken. And now, now that we have known each other so long, is this

money to step between our lives? I think not. I have done what I could, my Bell, to offer you something more than my love, and the future which had always seemed hitherto to be promising enough to me. I have made every effort a man could make. I have failed. But we are young and we love each other. There is no sacrifice which would seem a sacrifice made for you; I will not wrong you by thinking your love less true than mine. Does this seem strange to you, I wonder? Am I taking too much for granted, Bell? Again, I think not. What another woman, what an ordinary woman would cling to, is not what you would value, my own true-hearted love. The life that I can offer you I know that you will take.

"And now, one thing more. I am coming to Cairo. For many reasons I think it better I should have an explanation with your father without delay. Need I tell you how I long to see you? Surely, love, never was woman better loved than you! Write to me at once, telling me the probable date of your arrival, and then expect me by the next steamer leaving Venice. I cannot tell you what I feel when I think of seeing you again. I dare not think of it, for I am haunted by the strangest fear—of what? I do not know. Sure of your love, what is there which could touch me? But come to me, Bell, come soon. My whole being longs for you. I cannot live without you. Come back to me, my life, my happiness, my inspiration! Come back to me, my Santa Barbara!"

The paper dropped from her hands. She rose. She looked around. She saw the fair spring landscape; the tender gray of the sky, the wide undulating plain of fresh young green; she saw the far-off river shining in the sun. She listened; again she heard the echoing voices, the slumbrous murmur of the bees. There was nothing changed about her but the lengthening shadow on the wall. And yet, within the last half hour, she seemed to have grown into another life. A great yearning pity for the ruin she had wrought had mas-

tered every other feeling in her heart. The idea of self-forgetfulness, of self-sacrifice, not for the man she loved but for the man who loved her, had come to Bell for the first time, a revelation and a religion in one. Hitherto Bell Hamlyn had lived in a sort of moral twilight, a dim chaos of high resolutions, shifting impulses and decisions left to chance ; she had been groping blindly in the darkness, seeking in vain some point of shelter, some purpose and some belief. Pity, patience, self-sacrifice—for the first time she understood their full significance ; from that day the idea of elevating herself to Arthur's level, of winning back his respect became to her a sort of creed. For she was too young a convert not to need a personal object in all she did. It was not until long after that she realized it, but that day, those lonely hours in an abandoned temple had been a turning-point in Miss Hamlyn's existence. It was as though a blind man had suddenly received a revelation of the stars, — remote, inaccessible, often veiled by mist or hidden by the clouds, — yet always there, serene, immovable, and pure. Not that the sorrow had become less difficult to bear, the pain less weary to live down ; there were hard bitter hours yet in store for her, but there was something else as well—a purpose and an atonement.

"It is for his sake,—for Arthur's sake," she said aloud, and the mere sound of the words seemed to seal and fix her impulse. She looked around her once again, taking a mute farewell of the spot wherè the hardest fought battle of her life was won, and then she turned and passed slowly down into the shadow of the temple.

Riding home again through the twilight it was curious to observe the close resemblance this Theban plain bears to the Roman Campagna. The yellow Nile was flowing where the Tiber might have been ; there was the same blue line of hills at the horizon, the same soft sky arching over the undulating fields, with here and there a mass of brown and crumbling ruins ; one

heard the same sudden rush of wings as the birds started up from under the horse's feet ; above all, there was that same ineffable pathos in the look of things, — a sweet and tender sadness too deep for words, too hopeless for consolation.

Miss Hamlyn rode home very quietly, speaking little, thinking much of that new phase of life on which she was about to enter. Hitherto she had shrunk from sorrow, to-day she had learned to accept it. She felt lifted out of herself, ennobled. It was a still sad twilight, and all around her the air was full of the subtle unrest of the spring, but in her heart was peace, the peace of renunciation, — that peace which passeth all understanding.

CHAPTER XXI.

FAREWELL.

“Bis uns der Tod das kranke Herze bricht
Mein Lieb ! wir sollen Beide elend sein.”

AND after ten days they reached Antinoë. For the first time since leaving Assuan the wind was blowing from the south ; the men had laid down their oars, glad to do nothing for a while, setting the smaller sail and letting the boat drift slowly down the stream. One missed the familiar sound and song, and the afternoon seemed the longer for the silence.

It was still light when the *Princess* anchored. But Miss Hamlyn did not care to explore the ruins alone. Another dahabeah, probably that of the Campbells, which they had last seen at Asyoot, was in sight. She went ashore, but only to sit down under the palms and wait.

“You may come and call me when the others arrive,”

she said to Ibrahim, and the dragoman had gone away again and left her there alone.

It was an extremely sad evening. The wan pale sky hung low above a lonely field of ruins. There was not a bird song in the air, not a sound; the very river glided by, strong, smooth, and silent, without a ripple or a break. A low barren shore; a few palms, a narrow strip of green shut in by the far-stretching sands, and beyond that a heap of débris—mud-colored bricks and crumbling falling walls set in the waste of desert—is all that remains to-day of stately Antinoë, Hadrian's city, the proud memorial built by a Roman conqueror to distinguish the spot where his beautiful favorite sought death to save his imperial master and friend.

Greater love hath no man than this that a man lay down his life for his friend. Here, by the glistening, sinuous, solemn Nile, where the voluptuous-looking youth plunged into the river and was drowned, what space, what mystery, what memories! The long lines and steep walls of the Arabian hills, the Desert, the Nile, the coming night—what a background they made for the beautiful figure and face of the Roman favorite;—mighty and solemn things, in the midst of which the delicate sensuous youth, dedicated to love, to friendship, and to death, seemed for the moment the greatest and most real.

And has tradition spoken truly? Did Antinous drown himself only to protect his imperial master, or was it not from weariness of joy as well? We all know his face, with its drooping melancholy, its drugged and hopeless woe. Was there then no medicine to reach that sickened soul, that flower-like face, doomed—like a flower with a canker in its petalled heart—to droop and die, though without one fold the less of its exquisite fulness of beauty?

With great Egypt about us, shut in by the Nile, the Desert, and the night, think of that face of Antinous, more mysterious, more beautiful than them all! How

it lays hold of our imagination, of our sympathy, until we can but brood and wonder over the deathless grace and sweetness of its marble beauty! To say his face is flower-like; to say it seems bowed and brooding as though drugged by some unseen censer; to say its melting tenderness is equalled only by its voluptuous charm; to remember the full curve of his delicious mouth and the dimpled roundness of his chin, the ample smoothness of his cheek, the fine long nose, with its delicate sensitive nostril, the heavy lid and low brow and the clustering abundance of his curly locks; — what is this but to remember the image of the most exquisite and enervated life — to recall the most sensuous and saddened face that ever bore youth's seal of love and woe, or drooped, fed and sapped by all the mysteries of passion?

By his death he is a type of sacrifice, as of beauty and of pleasure — the one living memory among the many shadows. For it was a stately city that Emperor Hadrian built; and history speaks to us of a long line of temples, a marvel of towering walls and crouching sphinxes and stately colonnades. Where are they now? — a few scattered hillocks mar the Desert's perfect sweep. "Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy is now perished; neither have they any more a portion in any thing that is done under the sun."

Something of this was thought of and felt — the sentiment of beauty and sacrifice, the passion of self-surrender, the desire of delight, the sadness of what is not — by the girl waiting there in the growing darkness, under the palms. But presently she rose, shook off the retrospective mood into which she had fallen, and looked about her.

The expected dahabeah seemed to have reached the shore: there was a new flag fluttering between the trees and a light was moving along the bank. She turned to go down and meet the new comers, but as she did so, the sound of approaching voices made her start and stop and listen.

Some dark figures were coming up the path.

"Is that you, Mr. Campbell?" she called out.

"No. The Campbells have not come. But we have," another voice answered.

And then Bell recognized Mr. and Mrs. Meredith, and went quickly forward to meet them. They greeted each other gayly; they asked after one another's adventures, they spoke of the rate of progress, of the experiences of the last fortnight, and then there came an awkward pause.

"Is — are you here alone?" asked Bell.

Mrs. Meredith looked at her husband.

"Yes; —that is, Livingston is still with us, of course. He has only stopped to speak to a man; he will be here in a moment," Meredith answered with elaborate unconcern.

And then there was another silence. Mrs. Meredith was intently engaged in examining the handle of her parasol. Miss Hamlyn had clasped her hands tightly together; she kept her eyes fastened upon the ground. Mr. Meredith glanced inquiringly first at her and then at his wife, and shook his head and moved his lips in an inaudible whistle — an impromptu rendering of the Dead March in Saul.

But it was only a moment or two before Livingston joined them. He shook hands quietly with Bell and said something to her, — she did not understand what, — about her father. And then Mrs. Meredith interfered. "It is quite too late to see any thing to-night, Fred," she said nervously, "but don't you think you had better speak to that Copt yourself about getting some workmen to go with us to-morrow? It is quite impossible to believe what any of these people say. And afterward you may be very sorry you neglected such an opportunity for —"

"Egyptian research among Roman ruins?" said Meredith, with a laugh.

His wife looked at him indignantly. The density of man's intelligence had never seemed a more evident

or more exasperating fact—a sentiment she rapidly qualified as Livingston remarked, “Don’t you think a walk would be a better plan for us, Miss Hamlyn? You have been here two hours your father says; suppose you give me the advantage of your experience among the ruins?”

“Oh yes, do. And then Fred and I can attend to his business in peace. There is nothing I dislike more than to feel I am keeping people waiting,” added Mrs. Meredith, eagerly.

At that there was a general move. Presently,—when they had crossed the narrow belt of palms to where the light was stronger,—Livingston turned and looked his companion steadily in the face. “What is the matter with you? You are looking wretchedly ill,” he said abruptly.

“No; I have not been ill.”

“You are looking wretchedly. I never would have thought it possible that any living being could be so pale. What is the matter with you?” He kept his eyes fixed on her, and his voice changed and softened as he spoke; “What is the matter with you—Bell?”

“I—don’t—know.” She turned her face away and looked drearily out into the gathering darkness, “I am unhappy, I suppose.”

“Unhappy? Poor little child.”

The tender compassionate inflection of his voice moved her with inexpressible longing. The tears rushed to her eyes. “Don’t—don’t pity me. I cannot stand it,” she said with a stifled sob. They had been walking fast, as people walk when some intense preoccupation has blotted out all sense of the surrounding world. The others had taken a different direction. They two were out of sight or sound; lost in the twilight; hidden by the far-scattered heaps of brick and sand.

“Sit down here,” said Livingston suddenly, stopping short. “Sit down. I have a great deal to tell you—Bell.”

He sat down beside her, but they were both silent. All at once Miss Hamlyn raised her head and looked in his face.

"Arthur,—have you forgiven me?"

He did not answer. He did not seem to hear her. He gazed down at her fixedly for a moment, and then put out his hand and gently pushed back her loosened hair from her forehead. "Poor child! My poor little girl!" he said again.

He leaned forward and took one of her hands in his. "Bell, I want to speak to you very seriously. I came here on purpose for that. I have something to tell you." He stopped and looked at her with a troubled air. "I—love you," he said in a low voice. She did not speak; her eyes were fixed upon his face, her heart seemed beating up in her throat, making her tremble from head to foot with weakness and excitement.

"Yes. I love you," he repeated, with sudden vehemence.

"Arthur,—say that you have forgiven me."

He was looking at her still, with the same curious intentness.

"Forgiven you? Yes. I have—forgiven—. I have told you so. I have told you that I love you." He spoke in a smothered, automatic voice; the words dropped one by one from his lips as though some power foreign to himself and stronger than his will were mastering him. "I have come here to tell you so. I have come here because—I could not stay away. Because I love you."

There was a silence.

"Are you—sure?" she said, speaking almost below her breath.

He got up; he walked away a few paces; he came back. He stood close beside her, without touching her, looking down at her with the same sombre intentness in his glance.

"Do you—do you remember that day we spoke of George Ferris together?"

"Yes."

"If there is any thing left for me to know you must tell it to me now. There must never be another secret, another misunderstanding between us two again. Whether there is much chance of our ever being very happy together I do not know. But it is too late to think of that. There has been a fatality about it from the very first ;" and then, after a pause, "Whatever there still may be for me to hear, I wish to hear it now," he said.

"I *cannot*, Arthur! Some other time, but not now. Why will you make me remember him now? oh, why will you not let me—forget?"

He laid his finger tips lightly on her arm. "I wish to hear it now," he repeated calmly, but the slight air of authority which was habitual to him when he addressed Miss Hamlyn, deepened and became more marked as he spoke. She looked up and met his glance. A faint color rose to her cheeks, but she went on at once and without hesitation.

"It was last summer, when papa was in Paris and Flossy and I were waiting for him in the Tyrol. Mr. Ferris was travelling with some people we knew, slightly, and we all stayed together for about six weeks, and travelled together, and —. I don't know how it happened, Arthur; I *cannot* tell you. We were always thrown together from the first, Mr. Ferris and I. And I liked him very much. And then he fell in love with me. And then —." She hesitated.

"Go on," said Livingston.

"I had never known any one at all like him before. I do not want to justify myself, and I know it is as you said the other day, — there is no explanation possible for me; but I think you ought to remember that. I had never known any one who was in the least interesting to me before. I had never been anywhere except to some balls in Paris, and then I danced and I didn't think any thing about the men I saw, except that they knew how to dance. And besides, they were all exactly

alike. And George was so different. And he was so kind to me, poor fellow ! and I liked him, and then — he was the first person who ever said he loved me."

"Well ! Go on," said Livingston again.

"But that is all, Arthur. After we left the mountains we went down into Italy. To Rimini first, and then to Ravenna ; and we stayed there, Flossy and I, and George stayed with us. Ravenna is an old empty place, a sort of dead city, with wide abandoned streets, and there was no one there, and Flossy was tired, and George and I were always together. It was only last summer, but it seems to me that it all happened to somebody else a hundred years ago. There was an old church there where George painted, and behind the house there was a garden, — an empty old garden full of broken statues between the vines — where we sat sometimes ; and then we rode together. And once, when we were riding, George asked me to marry him. It was a day just like to-day, overcast and very still. We were riding along the beach and the water was all gray and motionless and silent."

She spoke in a low continuous voice ; absently, as though speaking to herself rather than to him. And, indeed, each one of her own words was carrying her farther and farther back into the dim, the shadowy places of the past. Old words, sweet sights, sweet long-forgotten sounds came thronging back again, waked to new life, — a thin, pale, curious vision of other days ; and she spoke of them as one speaks of the slight yet ineffaceable impressions of one's childhood. As of some vivid recollection, the accurate dispassionate detail of something past, and aimless, and apart from actual life.

"He asked me to marry him, but I could not, — and I told him so. All the excitement and the pleasure seemed to have died out of it the moment he spoke ; but I was so sorry for him ; he was so good and gentle with me, — even then. And we did not go any farther that day ; we turned our horses round ; we rode back : he was speaking of something else, I don't know what,

I was not listening to him ; for the more effort he made not to distress me with his own pain the sorrier I became for him, the more strongly I realized that pain, until there were few things I would not have said or done only to comfort him. And then,—he was telling me about a sister of his who is dead, and how much they had cared for each other, how much he missed her still, and he seemed so discouraged and sad, and I was so sorry for him. And then, all at once, he stopped the horses and leaned forward ; I could just see his face through the twilight, and he said, ‘ Bell, I do love you so much. Is there no hope for me at all? Are you sure that you could never never care for me?’ Something—I can’t tell you what—kept me silent. I ought to have said No, I knew I ought to say it, but all at once every thing seemed so unreal and so sad. It was like something in a dream,—we two all alone there by that lonely sea. The water kept creeping up in little gray waves,—little rippling waves that curled and crept, and crept along the shore, and —that’s all.”

They were both silent for a moment.

“ When I got back to the hotel I found Flossy crying over a letter from papa: Papa can’t bear Mr. Ferris, George’s father, and he was so angry with Flossy for having let me meet George in the Tyrol. That is the reason I never told her any thing about it. I meant that papa should never have any one to blame but me.”

“ And that is all, Bell ? ”

She hesitated ; she clasped her hands tighter together ; she turned away her face. For the first time she began to realize that it was to Livingston she had been telling this story, and the end had suddenly grown difficult to tell.

“ I don’t know—I don’t know how to make you understand the rest,” she said. “ It is so difficult to put in words. It seems so impossible it should ever have happened. For I might have put an end to it—George offered to give me back my word. I might have

put an end to it all—and I did not. It was one day when some one had told George about papa,—had told him who he was, and, how rich he is and all that. And George came to me and said how if he had known about my being an heiress, how, being poor, he would never have asked me to marry him; and he gave me back my word, and then,—and then, Arthur—I did not love him, but I could not imagine what life would be like if he were to go away, and I asked him to stay,—for my sake. Perhaps,—if it had been for any thing else,—I don't know. But for such an excuse as that,—for the pretext of money—when I knew how he loved me—no, it was impossible! And I asked him to wait. I asked him not to speak to papa until we came back. And I promised—I—”

Had Livingston been listening to what she said? In one hand he held a stick, with which he had been tracing cabalistic figures and writing words upon the sand. As she stopped speaking he carefully effaced the last sign and looked up.

“When we get back I shall go to Ferris myself,” he said slowly; “and I shall say to him, ‘Ferris, I met the girl you were engaged to at your own request, not knowing that she *was* engaged to you, and I have asked her to marry me and she has said yes. About Miss Hamlyn’s conduct there can be no question; we both of us love her, we are both equally bound to accept and respect her decision. About myself—that is another matter. Whatever satisfaction you think I can offer you, I am ready—’”

At first he had spoken slowly, deliberately, as though repeating a formula learnt by heart,—and indeed the phrase was one which had grown familiar to him by many imaginary repetitions,—but now, at the sound of his own words, he stopped short and laughed.

“Satisfaction! As though you could give a man satisfaction for a thing like that!” he said, his voice grown bitter with a curious contempt.

He turned impatiently away, and once more began

tracing a fantastic line of figures on the sand. There was something constrained, unnatural, in all Livingston's movements that day. A certain angry contempt, an impatient resentment of their mutual position expressed itself in every thing he did or said. For weeks he had fought against this moment ; for days and days lie had wearily gone over the argument with himself ; a hundred times he had vowed that no earthly consideration, no moment of weakness should ever induce him to forgive Bell Hamlyn her deception, to speak to her again. Every habit of thought, every tradition of his life, had pointed to the same conclusion. Pride, self-respect, honor even, had shown him what course to take. Like a ghost his own past self had arisen and judged him by the standard of that past.

"It is impossible," he had said. "Impossible"—and then again her face had risen before him,—the pale, proud, passionate face ;—pacing the deck in lonely restlessness far into the night he had been haunted by the memory of her eyes, their large and melancholy look came to him through the darkness with a mute mysterious reproach. He felt himself conquered, powerless,—powerless yet protesting. For it was the first time for years that any supreme emotion had entered into Livingston's life. A new, transforming, irresistible impulse had taken entire possession of his existence, and it was with a certain dull wonder that he recognized his own weakness under temptation. For he seemed suddenly to have abandoned all sense of responsibility, and to stand on one side, the mere critic and spectator of his own life. A morbid sense of fatality, of the uselessness of experience, of the blank uselessness of effort, was always in his mind. His love for Bell seemed to him but one more link — though the strongest — in the long chain of circumstance which was leading him on and on into unknown bewildering ways. No man struggling in mid-ocean could hold himself less accountable for the shore upon which he might drift, than did Livingston for any coming course of action. It was

not until some definite decision had been taken and acted upon that, in his present mood, he might turn, or pause, or look back. And all this Bell understood. Some blind desperate instinct had shown her in a moment, as it were, all the struggle, the reluctant protest which lay under those words "I love you." It was not only that her own life had been marred and disfigured — she suddenly saw the reflected action of her mistake marring and destroying the life of the man she loved. With a quickened vision she looked forward, she saw, she understood, all the consequences of his purposed act to him, and, with the same impulse, she started up and stood before him and spoke :

"And what will *you* think of yourself when you have done that, Arthur?"

"What do I think of myself now? But I shall do it. And I shall do it alone. I shall speak to Ferris myself; I will not have you see him again. I do not choose to have you see him. I would not —"

She looked at him with unutterable sadness in her face.

"You would not trust me to see him, Arthur; I understand. And yet you say that you love me!"

He grasped her hands almost roughly in his own. "Why do you say those things to me? Can't you see that we are both of us in the wrong? that there is nothing for us to do but stand by each other now? Can you not understand — oh, Bell, my darling, be generous with me, bear with me, be patient with me, love." He held her hands and looked at her fixedly for a moment; and he spoke with infinite gentleness. "We are both so unhappy," he said; "and this is our one chance of happiness, dear, — our last chance. And life is so long, and life can be so beautiful when one is happy. And we would love each other — when this is all over and forgotten we should still love each other, dearly. In a year or two we should look back and it will all seem like a dream to us that we ever hesitated. We shall not understand how we could have feared to

act. For there is only this one chance for both of us. If we lose it, if we give it up, we lose every thing,—and for ever. Child, you do not know what it is to look back at your life and tell yourself it is all over, that the one supreme opportunity which comes to all lives has come to yours, and, because you have lacked courage, because you have not dared to take your own life in your own hand, you have missed it, lost it for ever. And we are both so unhappy."

She lifted up her eyes ; there was the same deep sadness in her glance. "And do you think it would make you less unhappy to look back and see—a broken promise, and betrayal,—and the face of a man who trusted to our honor, and was mistaken?"

Mr. Livingston started ; he dropped her hands and stepped abruptly back. "Was it not perhaps a little late to think of that?" he began, bitterly enough, and then, catching sight of the deep speechless misery of her face, "Forgive me ! what a brute I am to speak to you so," he said remorsefully. "And the other day too !—I have been made so wretched remembering how I spoke to you the other day. I would never have believed that it could have been possible for me to speak to any woman as I have spoken to you. And yet you know how I love you."

"Arthur," she answered, and two great tears rolled slowly down her cheeks as she spoke, "I know that I love you, and I know that we—we must say—good-by. Dear, it is not your fault. Don't think that I mean to blame you ; I have deserved every thing—every thing that you have ever said: but I have killed your trust in me, and now—I could not make you happy, Arthur."

Did she expect an answer—a denial, perhaps? for she paused, and her lips quivered and grew whiter as no answer came.

"You—do not trust me. You cannot. I know it, and it is not your fault. But if you married me you would be unhappy all your life. Perhaps, at first, for a

little while, you might believe that I did love you, but afterwards it would all come back again — you would always have to remember how I had broken faith with George, and you would be miserable. While now, if we say good-by — In two or three years you will look back and remember me as a girl who had many faults, who was not worthy of you, but who — who —" She broke down. Her face dropped upon her hands. "Oh, but I do love you," she said.

Livingston took a step forward, he stood close beside her, he looked down into her face. If she loved him she would stay with him, he answered slowly.

"If I stayed with you it would be because I loved myself. Oh, don't you see, can't you understand why I ask you to let me go? What do I care for myself or for George? I care for you. It is because I will not have you do what is not worthy of you, — because I know you better than you know yourself, because —" She clasped her hands together, she raised her face, she looked with blank despairing eyes up at the soft clear darkness of the star-lit sky. "God help me! it is very hard," she said.

They stood facing each other for a moment, silent, intent; two motionless figures fast fading away into the indistinguishable gray of twilight. And to one of them, at least, it was a moment of supreme experience. The years have passed since then, — the long effacing years, the quick full years have passed, — and there are many memories of that time which have grown indistinct, grown faint and dim by contrast with the overcrowding present; — thin far-off shadows with neither place nor part among the thousand new interests, new hopes, new cares, which make Bell's life to-day. But happy, contented, occupied as she may be, there is yet one scene among the memories of her youth which neither time nor life shall ever take away. Sometimes in dreams she sees it still, sometimes in waking dreams she sees again that darkling waste of sand, she hears the far-off voice of the river, the dry rustle of the wind among the palms,

and all about her is silence and night,—the solemn, mysterious, fathomless night of Egypt, with its lustrous stars looking down upon her, mute serene witnesses of a far-off anguish. And once again something of the old dead passion of her youth awakens. The separating years roll back and some dim vague shadow of the old anguish falls upon her, thrills through her at the well-remembered words—“If you *can* go, you may leave me.”

And then there is silence between them.

The night is warm, but she shivers and draws her cloak closer about her.

But Livingston is speaking again.

“If you *can* go, you may leave me. But we shall never see each other again. I have said all I can. The choice is yours; but whatever choice you make is final. If you leave me now we shall never see each other again. It shall be as though one of us had died to-night.”

From the first his ascendancy over Bell has been so paramount, hitherto he has so moulded and shaped her actions to his will, it has never occurred to him to think of her except in connection with himself. He is too well assured of his influence over her even to be jealous. His resentment at Thebes was the slightest momentary flush—a mere touch, just strong enough to concentrate and vitalize, as it were, his passion. Even now he is not jealous of Ferris, but her hesitation is irksome to him. He wishes to have done with all uncertainty. He feels impatient, and chafes at any minor resistance where his own will, his own resolution, has already succumbed. It is with a shock of blank incredulity that he listens to her answer.

“No, we shall never see each other again,—never any more. But, oh, my love, let us say good-by in peace!” She comes near to him, she puts her arms about his neck. “It is as though we both had died to-night,” she repeats passionately. “It is as though a grave were dug between us. Oh, my love, my love, whom I shall never see again, be gentle with me now;

say you forgive me ; kiss me. Give me one kiss before I go. And do not part with me in anger," she pleads. "Say that you will not forget me, Arthur. Let me have at least that to remember in all the coming years ; let me think I still count for something,—it matters not how little,—in your life. Arthur, say that you will not forget me."

"And why should I remember you ? As George Ferris's wife what will you be to me ?" he answers slowly, and at the sound of his voice her fingers relax and her arms drop loosely at her side. "You will have left me because, although you loved me, — I believe that, — your love was not strong enough to endure. Whether I shall ever think of you or not, I do not know. But be assured of this, that in every way a man can forget a woman who has played with his life and left him, — in every way, — I shall forget you."

The slow measured words stab her one after the other like a knife.

She turns to go without another word, — what is there left to say ? but she has not taken a dozen steps before she stops and looks back and puts her hands out blindly, unconsciously. He is at her side in an instant. His arms are about her, she feels the warm touch of his lips on her mouth.

"I knew, I knew you could not leave me," he says vehemently. "Bell, think of what you are doing ! You are sacrificing us both to a shadow, a myth. Your promise to George is broken — broken. It is gone ; it has ceased to exist for months. You did not remember it months ago, are you more bound by it now, — now that you have made me love you, — than then ? Suppose you did go back to Ferris, what could you say to him ? Is he a man to hold you to a mere word, an empty form ? Do you think so little of him as that ? I tell you it is too late. It is impossible you should leave me now."

His words bring back some other words. "*Sure of your love, what is there that can touch me ?*"

"That—that is for George to decide," she says wearily; "but he must know it."

And then, for the first time, Livingston grows jealous. "I will have no decision dictated to me by George Ferris," he says curtly. "I have nothing to ask at his hands." He takes her in his arms again, he looks with passionate appeal into her face. "Don't you know that you are mine?" he says, "mine,—and that I shall never let you go, my love, my poor frightened little love." And then unloosening his hold, "See, you are free to leave me if you like, but—will you not stay with me, Bell?"

The last gray glimmer of the twilight has long since faded away. It is an hour or more since they have left the boat, and Mr. Hamlyn has grown restless. Half a dozen men have been despatched in different directions to look for them. As Livingston speaks a light comes towards them, moving rapidly along the path; it is the lantern of one of the crew.

"Quick! answer me before that light comes. You will stay,—yes or no?"

There is an instant of breathless silence, the very wind creeping more stealthily by them, pausing lest it should lose her answer. Even now, after all these years, something of the supreme suspense of that moment comes back to her. She hears again the sound of the quick advancing footsteps brushing through the sand; she sees the light swinging from side to side, and shining on the sailor's smiling face; the long black shadow of his stick reaches across the ground and points at her again, and then she lifts up her head.

"No!" she answers blindly.

And then she remembers nothing more.

CHAPTER XXII.

A BUNCH OF VIOLETS.

"I that have slept awake, and you
Sleep, who last year were well awake.
Though love do all that love can do,
My heart will never ache or break
For your heart's sake."

THEY were rather the fashion at Sheppard's that season. It was something to talk about ; an opportunity for expressing a few of those valuable opinions about the proper treatment of a fever which all self-respecting travellers possess. There was quite a little excitement every morning at breakfast over the doctor's last bulletin ; the most decided and opposing theories — strengthened by all the authority of personal reminiscence, and diversified by many anecdotes — were current as to the cause and probable duration of Mr. Hamlyn's illness, and the daily inquiries after his progress were made with but very little of that amiable indifference to the answer which characterizes the general feeling towards a sick man in a crowd.

That some of this interest should fall to his daughter's share was natural enough, and there were many good-natured advances and friendly offers of chaperonage made to her in those days. But the girl was both reticent and shy ; the deep preoccupation of a first great sorrow stood like a barrier between herself and the proffered kindness ; she was living in a world of her own, an isolated unsympathetic world, peopled with sweet sad dreams, with bitter memories, — and after some few ineffectual attempts the others went their way, wondering a little perhaps, but still speaking of Miss

Hamlyn as of a model of filial devotion. It seemed peculiarly this girl's fate to be admired for the very qualities she did not possess. For sickness,—in spite of all time-honored traditions to the contrary,—mere sickness, unsanctified by the approach of death, is but a sorry bond between antagonistic natures, implying as it does an enforced tenderness perhaps more irksome than any other form of service. Mr. Hamlyn ill was not a whit less exacting, less unexpansive, than Mr. Hamlyn well ; indeed the consciousness of his thwarted plans, his impatient chafing at this unexpected check, made him any thing but a model of the ideal invalid. As a general thing, if not a fond, he was at least an indulgent father, and very proud of Bell, but there was but little habit of companionship, but little familiarity between those two ; and it was very characteristic of Mr. Hamlyn's uneasy pride that he should prefer to vent his humors upon his wife's unresisting head rather than expose himself to his daughter's silent, involuntary, but unavoidable criticism.

Looking back now at those far-off days of her youth, it is with a certain wonder that Bell recalls the complete isolation in the midst of which for a time she lived. But then, it all seemed perfectly natural ; and she went from one day to the next, asking nothing, giving nothing, absorbed in her own life, unconscious and indifferent to the world about her.

There are, I fancy, few people who would be tempted to enter Shepeard's garden a second time, for it is an unlovely spot at best,—filled with that *banal* melancholy which clings like a blight to all unbeautiful public places ;—but for some reason or other the spot had taken Miss Hamlyn's fancy. She spent hours there in those days pacing up and down between the double lines of dusty neglected shrubbery,—past the small stone basin half filled with last year's fallen leaves, where a feeble thread of water still trickled slowly from the broken fountain's brim, and back again between the rows of sickly spotted red geraniums growing rankly among the weeds. At the farther end there was a

banyan-tree, the space between its roots made into a storehouse for disabled tools, broken flower-pots and kindred rubbish ; near by stood a long row of boxes filled with cooing white pigeons imprisoned behind wires. Opposite, screened off from the garden by a line of evergreen trees, were some stables, where all day long one heard the stamping of impatient hoofs, and the deep guttural voices of the native grooms. How well she remembers it still !—how each trivial detail of that place comes back to her, bound up in closest association with some of the longest, the saddest hours of her life !

She was there as usual one windy afternoon late in March, and as usual she was carrying a book. At first she had made some slight pretext of reading, but her thoughts had but little in common with the printed page under her eyes. A new restlessness seemed to have taken possession of her ; every few minutes she drew out her watch and looked anxiously at the time.

It was in reality but a few weeks since the Hamlyns' return to Cairo ; but to Bell, in her impatient suffering, an incalculable interval of time seemed separating her from that day at Antinoë. For great emotions have this power of throwing back recent events into a distant perspective ; any violent change or final decision seeming, after the first moments of bewilderment, to carry with it all the authority, and express all the immovable force of the remotest past. For the first few days after her last interview with Livingston she had been as it were stunned or paralyzed,—it was not until they had actually left the river and found themselves once more in a city, away from all the associations and habits of the last three months, that she began to realize how much of latent hope had lingered under all her despair. As day after day passed by, as a new routine, new habits of daily life grew up around her, she began, faintly at first, and then more and more keenly, to understand the full significance of this separation. For while one is young it is difficult to comprehend the permanence of

sorrow ; it was only the actual passing of the tedious days,—that unanswerable argument of time,—which could prove to her at once the force, the durability, and the hopelessness of her desire.

For a dead silence had fallen between herself and that past. Once since their return she had seen the Campbells for a few minutes, hurrying through town to catch the English steamer ; and once—once only, she had heard of Livingston. It was perhaps a fortnight after their return. There had been a Mohammedan festa that day, and the endless procession of pleasure-seekers pouring down the Shoobra road had made the afternoon seem one long confusion of vivid shifting color, of rolling carriages and prancing horses, and swift lithe runners half hidden in a dazzling haze of sunshine and of dust. It had been a long and rather busy day to Bell ; she had been driving with some people all the afternoon, and it was a relief to get away from all those good-natured, contented, uninteresting faces, and be no longer forced to hear and answer the endless anecdotes and small enthusiasms which displayed the effect of travel upon the gentle dulness of those minds. It was a relief from the glare and noise of the crowded clattering table d'hôte, to get away into the quiet darkness of her room ; and Miss Hamlyn drew a long breath of satisfaction as she locked the door behind her and went over to her window and leaned out.

The day had been singularly lovely ; at nine o'clock at night the sky was still tremulous with light and heat ; here and there a star shone faint and far against the pure pale depths of space. The window overlooked the garden, and Bell could see the slow stirring of the wind in the tree-tops and catch the sweet dulled scent of the jessamine by the wall. She stood there for a long time. Once—twice—somebody came to her door and knocked, but she neither moved nor answered. Through the opposite trees she could see the lights of a café chantant across the square,—the clashing iteration of its dance music was the only sound that jarred

against the peaceful stillness of the night. She was leaning her head upon her hand, looking out at the dark uncertain outline of the trees, at the pale and distant sky. The overpowering scent of the jessamine came floating up to her in waves of penetrating fragrance ; the stars seemed larger and more near ; the wind rustled and stirred in the branches close beside her window, and her very soul seemed floating out on a flood of new and delicious emotion ; a consciousness of youth, the intoxication of vague unreasonable hope sent a delicate thrill of expectation through her. She hid her face in her hands, but the clinging perfume followed her still with a subtle promise of fulfilment to all wild, all impossible desire. She leaned farther out, the warm caressing wind blew in her face and played about her hair. A sudden sense of strength and youth, — above all a feeling of youth, a vision of possibilities flashed across her mind. "Perhaps," she said half aloud. The stars had never seemed so near. She looked up at one of them, — a clear small planet a little apart from the rest. "Who knows?" she murmured, and looked at it again and smiled. Was there nothing more to expect from life? The night seemed full of beautiful possibility.

The clear chiming of a clock roused her at last. She got up, opened the door and went out into the hall. Mrs. Hamlyn was standing under the gas-light giving some order to a servant. She looked up with an animated glance, and Bell was struck at once with the flushed and pleased expression of her face. "What a pity you stayed so long with the Van Burens, child! I sent for you twice, but the man could not find you in your room. Mr. Livingston and Mr. Meredith have been here all the evening, and Mr. Meredith asked particularly after you. They have met lots of people since we left, and have had such funny adventures, — your father was quite delighted to hear about them. I asked Mr. Livingston if he could not come and dine with us to-morrow ; I told him you would be so dis-

appointed to have missed his call, but he said no, they start for Port Said with the first train to-morrow morning," said Mrs. Hamlyn. And before Bell slept that night she had written a letter. The morning's mail carried out with it a message and a summons to George.

All this had taken place a fortnight before, and to-day the returning P. & O. was due. It was, as I have said, a windy cheerless afternoon. The air was heavy and close and warm ; the sky colorless ; and sudden gusts of a hot enervating wind came whirling down the paths and ruffled the wings of the four pelicans who stood huddled together in a circle, their long sword-shaped bills and gleaming eyes half buried in a mass of feathers. Miss Hamlyn stopped in her walk to look at them ; and smiled at the remembrance of something Arthur had once told her ; she took out her watch, and it was amusing to see how the four sets of pink eyes followed her movement ; how the four long bills closed with a vicious snap as she turned away again ;— it still lacked half-an-hour of the time when Ferris's train would come in. Strangely enough, Miss Hamlyn had hardly given a thought to that approaching interview. She waited for his arrival with a certain dull, benumbed, indifference ;— it seemed merely of a piece with all the rest. To use her own expression, there seemed nothing *interesting* left for her to do. She was ready for any impulse, any cause of action ; as for her future relations with George they rested entirely in his hands ; she was willing to marry him, even, provided he did not require any thing more demonstrative than quiet acquiescence on her part. For the enthusiasm of self-sacrifice which had been the paramount feeling with her for a time had lost all hold upon her wearied imagination. It was impossible for Miss Hamlyn to associate the idea of any strong emotion with her own attitude towards Mr. Ferris. She felt confident that under any circumstances he would still wish to

marry her, but I doubt if the conviction gave her any especial pain or pleasure. There is nothing so cruelly hard as a passionate nature when it does not love. Something of this was passing with languid distaste through her mind as she stood leaning against a tree watching the uncouth movements of the birds. It is a dingy dusty garden at the best, and that an unimposing-looking tree, but both have had their history; and people curious in such matters are apt to linger for a moment trying to recall something of the brief passionate tragedy which was enacted in this very spot one summer evening years and years ago. To them the trivial ugliness of the surroundings seems to fade away as they imagine the little group of officers standing beneath the shelter of those branches, and see in their midst a man gifted with such rare personal beauty,—of such a gracious, princely charm of manner,—the natives marvel he should be Bonaparte's second, not his master. Fresh from the desperate victory of Heliopolis, at the very climax of his power, watching the erection of the pleasure palace he is having built, they see him standing there one moment; in the next there is a slight scuffle—a cry—a sudden rush of guards—a long silence. And Cairo "the Beautiful" stirs in her sleep, and lifts yet once again her proud rebellious head; for in the early morning the news goes out and leaps like a flame from lip to lip,—Kleber has been assassinated, and Egypt is lost to France.

But Miss Hamlyn was not thinking of that. There were only one or two of the most constant *habitués* left on the terrace that afternoon. In the hall a little group of men was collected about the black board on which the steamers' arrival at Alexandria is announced. There was a general drawing back and lifting of hats as Bell passed on; and one man who knew her slightly was glad to seize the pretext of speaking. There was no mail coming in that day, he hastened to assure her, with a great appearance of saying something very confidential.

"Has not the train got in?"

"It is not the train ; it's the P. & O. She can't cross over the bar. This khemseen is playing the very mischief down at Alexandria they say."

It was a day's respite, and Miss Hamlyn's face brightened involuntarily. "Oh,—thank you. We were expecting a friend to-day," she said with cheerful contradiction, and she gave him a bright flashing smile which caused Mr. Forrester to become rather absent-minded for the next few minutes.

And at that very moment, could she but have known it, retribution was drawing nearer, was crossing the Esbekeyah gardens to meet her, hurrying on with that quick light step, with that air of suppressed yet eager vitality which was so characteristic of the George Ferris of those days.

To us, his old friends of many years, Ferris has never changed ; but I hardly know how to convey to a stranger any clear idea of the peculiar joyous grace which at that time was expressed in his every word and action. The fact is, "Ferris is the only *young* man left," somebody said of him once. It was at the end of a long discussion on Michael Angelo, held over our pipes and beer in George's own atelier, high up in the sixth or seventh story of a Roman house. I can see his face now as he leaned forward to reply, the flushed, sensitive, mobile face, with the clear blue eyes and that boyish smile of his which always made him look so much younger than his years. We older fellows were apt to make a great favorite of George in those days, and many were the hours we lounged away in his studio, criticising his work, listening to his theories, laughing quietly at his wild generous raptures over such and such a man's work, or enjoying his equally vivid indignation at such a one's success. "As though a fellow like that were worthy even of the name of an artist. He's a picture manufacturer, I tell you—a mere *bric-à-brac* merchant!" he would say, his face kindling and flushing like a girl's. A hand-

some fellow too—he might have had the run of the best English-speaking society of Rome had he liked, but the lad was inclined to keep very much out of civilized society at that stage of his experience, in spite of all our counsels, for “I shall always look upon George as an unknown quantity until I see what woman he falls in love with. So why fight shy of your destiny, my boy? —particularly when we are all here waiting to see you through it, and give you the advantage of our valuable remarks,” old Macgregor used to say; and George would laugh and shake his head: “Man cannot serve both God and Mammon, Mac, you old heathen, and haven’t I given my heart to Our Lady of Milo?” he would answer, with a fine ingenuous blush.

Lieutenant Forrester, late of the Mediterranean squadron, and now waiting at Cairo for orders to rejoin his ship, stared with incredulous delight at the figure crossing over to Sheppard’s from the Esbekeyah park, and even the two exhausted-looking young officers of Her Majesty’s —th regiment — who were helping him kill that dreary interval between luncheon and dinner, which was the greatest trial of their lives — looked up with a languid interest from their cigars at the tone of his exclamation.

“By Jove, if that isn’t old Ferris!”

“What’s Ferris?” asked one.

“Man. Comin’ here. No, he isn’t; he’s buyin’ violets,” said Ensign Jones languidly. “Fancy a fellow’s stoppin’ to buy violets in this beastly wind, will you?”

But the effort was too much for the military imagination; they could only look on with an expression of resigned weariness at the fatiguing spectacle of Forrester’s impetuous start. He came back a moment after, talking and laughing with the exuberant friendliness of a man profoundly bored.

“Can’t stop? — but you must! Awfully glad to see you. Lots of things to tell you. And how did you leave all the boys? How’s old Tom? White has

gone home, you know, and—oh, sit down, won't you, and take something? What will you have to drink? Have to clap your hands if you want any thing here, you know. There isn't a bell in the house. And the servants don't even speak English. It's a beastly place."

"Aden is worse," remarked Mr. Jones sententiously.

"Oh, yes; by the way, let me introduce you to my friends. Mr. Ferris—Lieutenant Forbes. Mr. Jones—Mr. Ferris. Have a cigar, George?"

The two other men slowly turned their eyes in Ferris's direction and nodded.

"Smoke?" suggested Mr. Forbes, producing a leather case.

"Thanks. No; I won't smoke." A waiter came up and spoke to him. "I really can't stop now, Forrester. My friends are at home and I've got an appointment. But I'll see you later on," he said, hurrying off.

Up a long wide stair and down to the farther end of a long wide corridor, a covered gallery opening out upon the leafy inner court. They stopped before a closed door. Some one was playing on the piano in the room. "That is Mademoiselle," said the servant.

"Very well. You may go."

He stood there in the semi-obscurity of the hall for several minutes. He smiled to himself, but his heart was beating violently, and he could not keep his hand from trembling a little as he knocked at the door. The music went steadily on. He knocked again, and then gently turned the lock and walked in. He saw a large square room whose open windows looked out on a grove of palms, shivering and bending and flinging their branches wildly out against the sky. The last red glow of the cheerless day lingered and burned in dulled and dying fires behind the wind- vexed trees. The whole room was full of the pale wan color, and the wan light and the violets' smell

seemed to mingle together and become to him a part of his memories of that hour.

Miss Hamlyn was sitting at the piano, with her back to the door. She wore a long gray dress, buttoned up to her throat like a nun's, and all the color about her was where the red reflection caught and shone and lighted up her hair.

"Is that you, Flossy dear?" she asked, turning her face slightly towards Ferris, but without looking round.

The clear familiar sound of her voice touched him with such incredulous delight he could not answer. He stood still where he was, just inside the threshold of the door, and looked at her in silence. "Is that you, Flossy?" Miss Hamlyn repeated. And then, the silence startling her, she turned her head, and her eyes met those of Ferris.

"I have brought you some violets, Bell," said George.

It was perhaps the happiest moment of his life.



CHAPTER XXIII.

"VERFEHLTE LIEBE, VERFEHLTES LEBEN."

"Deep as first love and wild with all regret."

IT was nearly an hour later when Ferris left the hotel. There was no one on the front terrace then but the pelicans and the two English officers, all equally engaged in looking forward to dinner, and with somewhat similar sensations. The pelicans were the first to notice Mr. Ferris's presence, which they did by snapping at him with a certain weary wickedness as he passed.

"Our friend the violet man looks rather knocked

out of time," Mr. Forbes remarked as George went down the steps.

"Been drinkin' perhaps," his companion suggested, with the brief sententious philosophy born of a residence at Aden.

An empty carriage was passing. The driver looked at George and held up his whip. Ferris got in mechanically. "Where to?" He pointed straight before him.

For an hour or more he sat there perfectly motionless, with folded arms, his eyes fixed on the cushions of the opposite seat. Now and then the driver looked round for more directions; he was always met with the same silent motion of the hand. Ferris had but one motive now, to keep moving forward, to crush out thought with action and strike memory dumb. It was growing dark when the horses suddenly stood still, and he started and looked around. Before them was a bridge, then a vast sea of sand, and, farther still, a dim pointed mass standing out against the sky. A dozen men were crowding about the carriage; one of them opened the door and invited him to get down. He did so mechanically and looked around him; his eye fell on his driver: "What is it? What the devil did you stop for?" he asked.

The man looked puzzled. "Ya, howadji — pirameed!" he said; "pirameed!" He pointed to the darkling outline rising up before them. Ferris burst out laughing. "Take me back," he ordered. He got into the carriage again and pointed back to the town. The man climbed up on his box once more and turned the horses' heads towards Cairo. Hitherto the crowd had been silent, awe-struck, lost in wonder over this new and inexplicable sight — this stranger turning away at their very gates. But as the horses struck into a sharp trot the enormity of the action filled them with sudden fury. With a common impulse they sprang forward in pursuit of the fast disappearing carriage. "Backsheesh, howadjil backsheesh!" they howled with one accord.

Clamorous, eager, enraged, with flying white drapery, with gleaming eyes and panting breasts, they hastened madly on, whirling their long staves about their heads. "Backsheesh! backsheesh!" — it was like a charge of the Furies pursuing some lost soul.

But the horses trotted steadily along the dusty road. The cries grew faint — grew loud again — and died away into the night. The noise had jarred and broken through Ferris's trance. He looked around him now ; he saw the marshy fields on either hand ; he saw the river ; he noticed the water gleaming through the palms. It was a long straight causeway, bordered with trees whose shadows fell across the road at set intervals, checking it off in regular masses of light and shade. Ferris looked at them, and all at once they seemed to him to symbolize the years of his life — the useless fruitless years, and all the years to come — measured off, equal, alike, intolerable. An overwhelming sense of weariness, of mental and physical weariness, overcame him at the thought ; for a long while he sat with his face buried in his hands ; once or twice he laughed. The driver looked back inquiringly, then shook his head and chirruped to his horses.

At the first houses Ferris stopped him and got out. He put his hand in his pocket, gave him a handful of money without counting it, and walked away. The man stood still, looking first at the coins in his hand and then at the figure passing down the street. "God is great, and the stranger is God's favorite," he said gravely, after a pause. "The howadji is a prince — and an Englishman. He is mad."

Forrester lounging down the street with his friends, finishing his after-dinner cigar, was delighted to fall in with Ferris once again. "Thought you had given us the slip, old fellow," he said reproachfully ; "why didn't you come and dine with me? And didn't you see your friends?" No, Ferris admitted with a slight hesitation, the friend he had expected to find was — not there. And nothing was the matter with him except —

except this deused wind. And did Forrester know of any place where a man could get something to drink? Forrester knew of several such places. They were thinking of going to the opera — this from Lieutenant Forbes. The opera was an awful bore ; but perhaps Mr. Ferris would like to join them? Mr. Ferris would be delighted.

Half an hour later the four were sitting in a stage box together. The play was "Fra Diavolo ;" Mademoiselle Waldmann was taking the part of Zerlina. It was a very full house. Directly in front of them was the row of veiled boxes where the ladies of the Khedive's household sit in distinguished seclusion, improving their minds, cultivating their morals, and gradually acquiring a new understanding of civilized habits, by a close study of the European *ballet*.

The evening wore on. The brigands had succeeded in maturing their fiendish plans, had fully explained them to the public in a series of elaborate choruses, and were even now carefully concealed in the most prominent parts of Zerlina's chamber. "Per una serva, questa vita — questa vita — non c'è mal," sang that young lady, before her glass. The house rang with applause at the charming grace of her acting. In the pause which followed Mr. Ferris rose from his seat, went to the front of the box, leaned over and looked out. Below him a sea of absorbed enthusiastic faces were eagerly watching the stage ; opposite some rose-colored figures could be dimly seen pressing forward behind their white screen of net. Mr. Forrester was giving Mr. Forbes all the particulars of the last scandal of the harem. "There's a fellow in our regiment at Aden — " began Mr. Jones ; " Per una serva — non — c'è — mal ! " sang the Waldmann in her most ringing voice. A marked distaste to operatic performances was noticed as being one of Mr. Ferris's peculiarities in later life.

All of which was very well in its way, Mr. Jones remarked, standing on the top step of the flight leading

down into the street, and lighting a cigar, but — Mr. Ferris was a painter, he felt sure Mr. Ferris would agree with him when he said they ought to go somewhere else, do something different, — something more Eastern, don't you know, before turning in. *Couleur locale*, — that was the sort of thing he meant, don't you understand. And so, with Forrester once more reinstated as guide, they set off in search of an Oriental cafe.

It was not very far from Shepear'd's, the place they found ; a park-like enclosure filled with tables and chairs ; with a few feeble strips of turf, a great deal of gravel, some orange-trees in pots, and, at the further end, a covered stage where two or three ghawazee were pretending to dance to the wailing accompaniment of some native music.

They had not been there long before one of these girls rose, stepped down from the platform, and made the round of the tables collecting money in a cup. When she came to where the four young men were sitting she stopped and looked at them with an easy confident smile. "Pretty girl. Got a nice arm," remarked Jones, looking at her critically with his head on one side. Mr. Forbes began feeling in his pocket for some change. Mr. Forrester offered her a glass of wine. The only one who had not moved was Ferris ; he was resting his elbow on the table and his head on his hand. The ghawazee looked at him curiously for a moment, and then the ring on his finger — the ring Bell had given him — caught her eye. "Buono," she said. She put out her hand and touched the ring ; "buono!" She laughed ; she showed her broad white teeth, and raising her arms above her head, she clashed together the tinkling bangles at her wrists. Ferris started and looked up. He glanced mechanically to where her finger was pointing and, for the first time, remembered the ring. It fascinated him ; he sat staring at it long after the girl had walked away ; presently he drew it off and put it in his pocket. "It was safer on your finger,"

Forrester remarked. "I do not want it there," said Ferris.

The strident dissonant voices ; the glaring lights ; the talk of his companions ;—the very wind that, stealing in hot and enervating gusts between the trees, seemed to bear some subtle resemblance to the languid wailing of the music,—every thing about him oppressed him with a feverish sense of unrest. He got up abruptly from his chair. "See you to-morrow," he said shortly, and nodded to the others and walked away. "Well, of all the cool hands —" began Mr. Jones in a remonstrant manner. Then with sudden relenting, "What a jolly good fellow your fren' is any way, For'ster," he added confidentially. "Only man I ever saw who understood that story about Watson and the Colonel first time he heard it. You know the story? 'Bout Watson —old Watson of our regiment at Aden. Well, Watson, he said to me, 'Jones,' he said —"

But that story has nothing to do with this.

The girl who had spoken to Ferris was standing near the door, looking out. As he came near her she recognized him at once. "Buono?" she said, and struck the nearest table with her castanets, and laughed. Ferris passed on, the shrill empty laughter pursuing him like a taunt as he went out into the silent street.

"What a feller he is with women, too! A regular Don Juan, by Jove!" Mr. Jones remarked admiringly, standing up to look after Ferris's retreating figure with an affectionate emotion, not, I regret to say, absolutely above all suspicion of alcoholic influence.

It was between three and four o'clock in the morning,—that quietest hour in all the twenty-four,—when this "regular Don Juan" found himself standing in front of Shepeard's hotel. The wind had fallen. Through the motionless branches overhead he could see the peaceful radiance of the stars, while away to the east the paling sky thrilled with a vague uncertain promise of the dawn. He stood there for a long time, staring up at the closed and darkened house. The serene stillness

of an Egyptian night was about him ; the vast city lay hushed and sleeping all around. Once only he heard the distant baying of the dogs and saw a white-robed figure flitting stealthily and noiselessly by. But presently the far-off sound of footsteps drawing rapidly nearer came echoing down the street. Ferris started and moved. He looked once more, earnestly, up at the sleeping house. "God bless her!" he said reverently, raising his hat. And then, moved by some sudden uncontrollable impulse, he turned quickly back and pressed his lips against the granite pillar at her gate. And I think there was a tear shining in the poor boy's eyes as he turned and walked away.

Mechanically he took the same road over which he had already passed. A confused idea of liberating himself by violence from this cruel stifling uncertainty which had taken possession of his thoughts urged him rapidly forward ; as mile after mile vanished behind him his mind seemed to clear, he breathed more freely and the rigid strained expression of his face relaxed. He looked once more about him, he saw again the low-lying marshes, he saw the river shining through the trees. The waning stars burned in faint yet lustrous fire against the whitening sky. A light wind stirred once more in the branches, and as he hurried on a long mysterious murmur died slowly away among the leaves.

And now a thousand curious out-of-the-way fancies came crowding back. Sometimes it seemed to him he was on his way to look for Bell ; again, the whole day's experience was to him like an evil dream, and he stood still, and put his hand up to his forehead, and looked about him at these strange fields, this unfamiliar road, and asked himself if he were yet awake.

As he fell unconsciously into the long easy stride of a trained pedestrian, a hundred memories of past days came back to him and added to the confusion. He remembered a walking-tour he had made some

years before, with a party of German students, through the Austrian Tyrol ;—and then all at once he thought of the words and air of a little song one of those fellows was always singing. It was only a little ballad of Heine's, a few simple verses telling the story of the wounded knight who lies love-wounded although his lady be faithless. And he must despise her as faithless, this beloved of his heart ; he must look upon it as shameful, this longing bitter pain. And the ballad goes on to tell how he would fain ride into the lists and call the knights to combat—"That man may hold himself ready for death who dares to show one stain upon my love!" But the other knights are silent,—only his own suffering is not silent. He must turn the lance against his own,—his own complaining heart.

It is a sad little song fitted to a plaintive mournful air, and Mr. Ferris could not free himself from the recollection of its melancholy cadence. The night and the silence were full of it, he heard it in the murmur of the river's flow ; the rustling trees bent down and whispered the words after him as he passed, and the longing and the pain grew ever wilder as he pressed the pain deeper and ever deeper against his own accusing,—his own complaining heart.

When he reached the bridge a second time the dark masses of the Pyramids were standing out in bold relief against the cold gray of the sky. Whether from instinct, or prompted by the vague recollection of something he had read, he turned sharply to the left, making a wide détour to avoid arousing the sleeping Arabs in their village. And as the morning light grew stronger—in that strange twilight time between the darkness and the day—he crossed the Desert sands and stood before the Sphinx.

For hours he had been hurrying onward as though striving to reach some definite object and place, but now all further desire of effort seemed to have died away, leaving him nothing but a sense of vague and most

bewildering pain. He sat there for a long time, leaning forward, his head upon his hands. Once only he raised his face ; he looked up at the impassible Presence beside him — watching with stony eyes for the breaking of the day, — he looked out across the boundless shadowy sea of sand, out at the reddening sky. “What have I done? — my God! what have I done that I should suffer so?” he said and sprang to his feet and stretched out wild despairing hands up towards that peaceful sky. The impotent human anguish died away like a breath of wind in the midst of that eternal silence.

CHAPTER XXIV.

KISMET,

“These were things she came to know, and take their measure,
When the play was played out so for one man’s pleasure.”

IT was some three or four weeks later when the Hamlyns left Cairo. Their departure was unmarked by any unusual incident, and probably excited but little other emotion than that awakened by a lavish and prodigal distribution of backsheesh. Among the travellers themselves there was some slight diversity of opinion on this point. As the last whistle sounded and the train slowly shook itself together and moved off with a clank and a jerk, Miss Hamlyn uttered some quick exclamation and started to her feet. “What is the matter now? Has any thing been forgotten?” her father inquired fretfully. It was nothing. Only — only they would never see Cairo again, the girl answered turning very pale. And for the rest of the journey she preserved a taciturn attitude, “singularly out of place,” as her stepmother remarked — “on this joy-

ful occasion of their escape from such a tedious old hole."

Unfortunately for her appreciation of the festive character of their exodus, Miss Hamlyn was in a mood in which the latent sadness of things seemed visible to her on every side. She was never what I would call a particularly tender-hearted young person—and indeed I think that as a rule she regarded beggars and deformed people and poor people generally as an unpleasant side of life which chiefly concerned clergymen,—yet I am positive that there were tears of the tenderest compassion in her eyes, as she emptied her purse into the hands of a sallow young woman carrying a baby, whom she saw from the carriage window. A more experienced giver would, in all probability, have detected the mechanical whine of the professional; a more critical one would have suspected the plausibility of that pathetic looking child; but Miss Hamlyn illustrated her lack of common sense in the frankest and most satisfactory manner; and if the pity was rather of a sentimental order, having little to do with any sympathy for material wretchedness—being indeed a mere chance expression of that mood of deep discouragement which follows any violent emotion, making poets or cynics of us as character or circumstance decide,—at least the results from the beggar's point of view were all that could have been desired.

The road from Cairo to Alexandria runs between broken lines of mimosa-trees, across a vast and solitary plain, brightened here and there by the flaunting blossoms of the cotton-plant, or growing green and waving where the long fields of rice are fringed by a restless border of golden feathery reeds. The heat and the monotonous movement of the train soon sent Mr. Hamlyn asleep. His wife sat near him, fanning herself softly, with half-shut eyes. At the other end of the carriage Bell had ensconced herself in the corner by the window. The somnolent stillness of the noon rested upon the world, drowning the landscape in a quivering

haze of light, and casting such a spell of silence over the earth that the very recollections of past experience, moving in slow review before her mind, had something of the remote unemotional vividness of dreams.

Perhaps the very sting of all that experience lay in its commonplace conclusion. To act wrongly is, to an imaginative nature, bad enough ; but to act wrongly and yet in an ordinary manner — to be faithless without rising above the most accepted theories of woman's fickleness — is simply humiliating. Lieutenant Forrester, beguiling the tedium of a Cairene afternoon with the latest version of some piquant incident connected with the last "sensational" divorce case, — and enlivening the story with a few casual observations about woman's well-known inconstancy, marked by all that decision and breadth of statement which distinguish the opinions of a man unbewildered by the slightest experience, — was fairly startled by Miss Hamlyn's reception of the same. For women, that young lady informed him, with an air of lofty conviction, were exactly what men had made them. If Adam had not been a fool Eve would have remained in Paradise. And for her own part, — with a sudden transition from ancient history to the present day, — she was sick and tired of these sweeping, unjust, unprovoked — She checked herself with a start, and to the young man's infinite surprise, a flood of crimson rose and suffused her pale cheeks. "I detest such discussions," she said, hastily ; and it was several days before she would acknowledge Mr. Forrester's morning greeting with any thing more friendly than the most distant of bows.

It was at nearly the same time, I think, that Miss Hamlyn took to going to church. Religion had in past years been rather an intermittent matter with Mr. Hamlyn, — a form of respectability to be indulged in occasionally and provisionally, as it were, until — prosperity finally crowning his efforts — he should find time to pronounce from experience upon that, as upon the other habits of a gentleman of leisure. And I fear Bell's early

religious training was of the most erratic kind, church in the child's mind being solely associated with those rare occasions when the mysterious guidance of business leading Mr. Hamlyn's footsteps back to his native state, an interval of new frocks and other little girls to play with set in,—an era of plenty, only tempered by the restraint of a Sunday School, and overshadowed by the awful presence of her grandfather. And although it is true that later on a countless multitude of Swiss pastors, Evangelical divines, and High Church curates had passed in kaleidoscopic confusion before her eyes, it was with as pure and spontaneous an impulse as the impulse of a little child that Miss Hamlyn had started off that morning, her soul groping with blind yet confident instinct after some higher power, some active consolation strong enough to rescue her from the blank deadness of her present life.

What she found was a large empty-looking hotel room, still redolent with the remembrance of a departed breakfast, and in one corner a row of austere dowagers, a few bored and melancholy men, and several rows of empty chairs.

By some accident she had arrived late. It was not until he had proceeded some way into the service that the Rev. Mr. Meeks, looking up from his book, became aware of the presence of a face which, in his infatuation, he had often likened to the face of the Dresden Madonna. And at the same moment, with a painful flush which extended to the very roots of his pale blond hair, he recollect ed the unholy desire of avenging himself for much copious and gratuitous interference, which had caused him that morning to select one of his second-best sermons, a terrible discourse on the topographical character of Idumæa, "as a stopper to those old women."~ And then this unfortunate young man appreciated for the first time the difference between an exceedingly dry argument read aloud in the approving silence of his own study, or delivered in the presence of a lovely reverential face under the puzzled and inquiring gaze of two tender

flower-blue eyes. But being a brave little fellow as well as an exceedingly foolish young clergyman, he worked his way steadily through that awful sermon, and even added to it, "for conscience' sake," a ten minutes postscript about the Dukes of Edom ; delivering himself of their respective names with a desperate defiance of manner which excited much astonishment among the old ladies at whom they were apparently hurled.

Miss Hamlyn was very affable to Mr. Meeks the next time she happened to meet him in the hotel parlor. She took the kindest interest in his somewhat confused account of his late experiences with a camel, "looking more like an angel than ever," the young man thought with an inward groan ; but she never went to hear him a second time.

It is true that in those days she had hardly a moment of leisure. Ferris's arrival had been to her a shock, an event, after long weeks of morbid self-questioning ; and its chief effect displayed itself in a feverish and restless activity. Her father growing convalescent, Bell had taken complete possession of Mrs. Hamlyn's time ; together they had "done" Cairo with a thoroughness calculated to excite the envy of the most conscientiously long-suffering of tourists. And with what result? Miss Hamlyn had gone up to the Citadel one day with some English people, friends of the Campbells, whose acquaintance she had lately made. The others were still lingering in the court of Mohammed Ali's mosque, — that wonderful citadel mosque with its semi-transparent walls of alabaster, whose strange unreal whiteness seems the effect of the fantastic light of the Crescent of the East sculptured above the door, — but Miss Hamlyn, who had been there very often, had passed farther on, and, standing behind an angle of the parapet, was watching the twilight creep across one of the most beautiful sights in the world.

Up at this height the day was dying slowly, but down below lights were already beginning to shine in the open spaces between the minarets and the roofs. Farther

on, a pale silvery radiance gleamed along the winding river's flow, and a light gray mist softened and veiled the towering forms standing alone in that vast wilderness of sand. In the courtyard directly below her, three or four soldiers were busied about a fire ; on the opposite terrace a dark figure bent and bowed in the attitude of the evening prayer. A great silence and peace and coolness seemed floating down upon the wearied world from those pure depths of pale and tranquil sky. And with that stillness came a deep sense of lassitude to Bell. She laid her folded hands upon the stone parapet in front of her ; she looked out at the winding sinuous river losing itself in the night ; the light mist creeping and rising along its banks did not seem to her more fugitive or more purposeless than did her life. She thought of George,—the sound of his name brought with it the old reluctant thrill. She thought of Livingston,—his face had become to her like the vague unsubstantial face of a dream. She had never had a likeness of Arthur, and not even that poor touch of reality seemed left to her past experience. “And I, why I’m not yet twenty,” she said to herself, with a sort of dull terror ; and like the light mists shrouding away those eternal Pyramids, she foresaw the coming years effacing and blotting out the memory of that early love. “If I could only find some one to tell me what it all means !” she said passionately. Miss Hamlyn was still childish enough to believe that the answer to life’s question could be found in some definite formula ; she was still young enough to look vaguely yet instinctively forward to some impossible realization of an arbitrary happiness, forgetting that in some form sacrifice is the inevitable conclusion and condition of life, and the one question, — shall this sacrifice be made to a mean or to a noble object? to one which elevates or to one which degrades?

As the train drew near Alexandria the look of the landscape changed. The monotonous rows of acacias were interspersed with slender fragments of olive-trees

bent down and broken by the fierce sea-winds. A few miles from the city they passed a broad and silent sheet of water ; at the sound of the train a few large birds rose heavily from out the sedge, winging their slow flight southward to where, at the distant horizon, a grove of palms stood sentinel-like against the evening sky, guarding the far-off entrance of the Desert.

At sunset the wind grew stronger. There was a heavy blow all night, and the moaning of the sea could be distinctly heard through every lull in the storm. As they steamed slowly out of the harbor the next day, the sand was blowing about on the shore in a thick yellow cloud, a cloud of shifting shadows and dazzling golden lights, which seemed to stretch its "dusk and splendid folds" to the farthest point of land. At the foot of the lighthouse the surf came rolling in until the leaping spray fell in a glittering shower on the beach. Here and there a tall black mast or tapering spar pierced its way through the shining mist ; the shore dropped lower and lower ; to Miss Hamlyn, leaning over the vessel's side, a faint golden line at the horizon was the last fading vision of the East.

Outside the harbor the sea was rougher yet. The long plunging movement of the waves had soon cleared the deck of all but the most experienced sailors. When they went in to dinner the long and brilliantly lighted table was all but empty of guests.

As Miss Hamlyn took her seat, looking up with a smile at something her neighbor was saying, some one else opened the door of his state-room and sat down opposite her.

"Good evening, Miss Hamlyn," said this last comer, quietly ; and, "don't you see who it is, Bell?" Mr. Hamlyn asked, almost at the same moment. And then Miss Hamlyn looked up and smiled, and said something inarticulate ; and except for the unusual flush on her cheek as she turned a moment later to answer a question of Captain Bixby's, and that gentleman's professed disappointment over the mysterious disappearance

of that fine healthy appetite, "which was a perfect pleasure to see, Miss Hamlyn. It was, by George!" there was absolutely nothing in this meeting calculated to interest the average observer.

As the dinner drew near its close conversation became more general. "This is what I call rather rough on your friends, Bixby," said Mr. Hamlyn, in jocular remonstrance, as a roll of the ship emptied a dish of oranges into his lap. Captain Bixby, a large sea-captain of a somewhat florid type, laughed, and leaned back in his chair with a fiercely benevolent expression of an over-fed lion. "Yes, I suppose it's what you landsmen would call a gale. But, my dear sir, if you wanted wind you ought to have been with 'us coming out. We were two days standing off and on watching our chance of getting over the bar. And by the way, I'll tell you a story about that. — Steward, wine to this gentleman. — There was a countryman of yours on board, — capital fellow, an artist — can't remember his name — who came to me as soon as we got in sight of that blessed old hole. 'Captain,' says he, 'have you got any objection to letting me take my chances of getting ashore in the next small boat that passes?' 'My dear sir,' said I, 'not the slightest. Your life's your own to do what you like with, I suppose. But I must put one condition upon your going. We have three clergymen on board, and I must insist upon your selecting yourself the one you wish to have preach your funeral sermon. I can't have an ecclesiastical difficulty on board my ship,' I said. Ha, ha! Pretty good, wasn't it?"

"And how about the American? did he get in?" Livingston asked.

"He got in, oh yes—he got in. Though he had a narrow squeak for it at one time. By George, when I saw the way that boat was shipping water — ! But what can you do with a fellow who wants to get ashore to see his sweetheart — eh, Miss Bell? And a fine fellow he was too. Sorry I can't remember his name. An easy name it was — queer I can't think of it, — Furness

— Ferris — Ferris, was that it ? Perhaps you might have met him at Cairo, — a tall fellow with blue — What ! going to desert us, Miss Hamlyn ? What's that for, now ? No queerish feelings, eh ? ”

Oh, no ; Miss Hamlyn felt perfectly well. It was only so exceedingly hot here — with all the hatchways closed. She would go upstairs for a moment and get some fresh air and look at the waves.

Captain Bixby turned deliberately round in his chair to watch her exit. It was worth while to take some trouble, by Jove ! to see a woman walk like that. He hadn't seen any thing like it, no not since '57, when he had the honor and the pleasure of taking the Duke and Duchess of — to Bombay. There was one of the daughters, Lady Mabel, who married General — General — ; what the deuse *was* the fellow's name ? Take some more wine, Hamlyn, while I try and remember his name. General —

But they finished the bottle before they did the story.

As Bell reached the deck the first heavy sea came breaking over the bow. She took refuge in the companion-way one moment, and then, some sailors passing, and the ship righting again, she got them to lash a chair to the wooden railing about the mainmast. A few feet away from her, stretched out at full length on the bench and muffled in a pile of shawls which gave her something the appearance of a disconsolate plaid mummy, lay the melancholy remains of one of the lady passengers ; and presently she heard voices, and three or four men came up on deck. They stood steadyng themselves by the door for a moment, and then, “ Come along, Livingston. Let's go and have a smoke,” somebody said, and there was a general move forward.

An hour later the wind had fallen. The sea was still heaving and troubled, but the moon had risen at last, and fitful spaces of a watery light gleamed here and there in the torn and tumultuous sky. The ship was very quiet. Now and then a dark figure went staggering by carrying a swinging lantern which

cast a long reflection across the wet and glistening decks ; once one of the officers passing stopped to say a few words to Miss Hamlyn ; and now and then the sheep called piteously from their pens. Something of the wild tumult of the waves, the fierce exultation of the wind and the night, had keyed the girl up to a pitch of intense excitement and suspense. The wet breeze dashing in her face — the surging, flying motion of the ship — the very weirdness of the light and shade in the shifting storm-tossed clouds — thrilled her with mysterious promises of some impending change.

As the sea grew calmer a series of feeble tentative shudders began to run along the surface of the human bundle at her side. Finally an arm and hand slipped out from between the folding of the shawls and wildly waved in the air, and a hollow voice asked plaintively if it was all over ? and if she — the owner of that hand — could get downstairs ? Miss Hamlyn looked at her in some dismay. “ Perhaps — I wonder if *I* could help you down ? ” she began doubtfully.

“ I hear a man. Call him, ” said the muffled voice, with a new decision, and presently Livingston had given her his arm and was looking anxiously for some one to take her off his hands. When he came back Miss Hamlyn was still in the same place, kneeling beside the chair, busied with some futile pretext of folding together the shawls.

He stood watching her in silence for a moment, and then, still in silence, offered her his arm and led her to a more sheltered spot at the vessel’s stern. In those few minutes the sky had grown still clearer, although a thin veil of gauzy mist still trailed across the spaces between the rent and flying clouds, and Bell, looking up at it nervously, made some incoherent remark about the storm being over and Mrs. Hamlyn expecting her below.

“ If you will wait a moment — I have something to give you, ” Livingston said. And then, with a palpable effort, “ I have been in Syria since — since the last

time I saw you. And I met George Ferris at Baalbec. That is the way I knew which steamer you were going to take," he added abruptly.

There was an embarrassing pause.

"How — how was Mr. Ferris — George?" asked Miss Hamlyn, her eyes still fixed on the surging track of the ship.

Mr. Ferris was well enough. He had been sick with the fever at Jerusalem — but he was well enough now. "He is an awfully good fellow — Ferris," said Mr. Livingston moodily.

"Yes." Miss Hamlyn shivered and drew her shawl closer about her. "I must go," she said, and half turned away, and then stood still.

"Wait a moment."

Livingston put his hand in his pocket and drew out a notecase. "I told you I had something for you. He asked me to give you that."

It was a letter of a dozen words. As she tried to decipher it in the uncertain light, her eyes filled with tears. "He has sent me back — this," she said, in a very low voice; "I gave it to him. I told him that when — that until he sent it back — I —" She was silent, and with a sudden gesture she held out her hand to Livingston. Lying on the palm of it he saw a ring.

He bent forward to look at it, and at the same moment the ship gave a lurch — the little glittering circle slipped through her fingers, fell against the railing and bounded into the sea.

Miss Hamlyn started and gave a slight cry, and then they both stood still — in conscious stillness — not looking at each other, waiting.

Had Livingston expected this? He was a man who had paid dearly for his experience; to a great extent he had lost his taste for action; he felt, but he no longer knew, the imperious need of expressing that feeling. Emotion wearied rather than stimulated him. It may be that he *had* expected this. It may be that

he had merely left the unravelling of his life to fate and chance and circumstance — in a word, to
KISMET.

And what he thought I cannot tell you. What he did was this : —

He took a step forward. He put out his hand and laid it tenderly upon Bell's cold and trembling fingers. She looked up ; their eyes met — and then their hands — and then —

The winds had parted the clouds at last. The moon riding high in the heavens threw a long glittering track of light across the heaving storm-tossed sea. And to one of them, at least, that shining track was as the pathway leading into Paradise.



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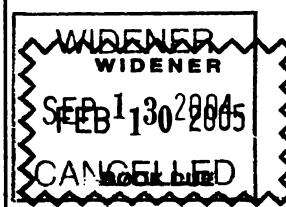
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